

Essential Services Access Network

Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019



ESAN

The Essential Services
Access Network

ESAN is a Registered Charity number 1157865

Chairman's Introduction



I am very pleased to be able to introduce the Essential Services Access Network's Annual Report and Accounts for 2018-19. ESAN has had another successful year in facilitating a dialogue between the voluntary sector, consumer groups, regulators and ombudsmen, as well as debating important issues in its member meetings.

I am delighted to welcome Barrow Cadbury Trust and Christians Against Poverty who have recently joined ESAN. I welcome further expansion of the network.

Looking forward, the policy context for ESAN's members looks to be challenging because of the political, regulatory and economic uncertainties. In these times, ESAN's core mandate to help the position of consumers in vulnerable circumstances is more important than ever and I am happy to note the increasing recognition of this issue. For example, for the first time, the Competition and Markets Authority has recognised vulnerability as an important element of its work.

Having been appointed in April 2019, I cannot take any credit for this year's activities. I would like to thank my fellow trustees: Kathie Nissan, Simon Sapper and Matt Vaughan-Wilson for their enthusiasm and hard-work throughout the year. I would especially like to pay tribute to our Network Coordinator, Rosalind Stevens, who does a superb job in writing the newsletter, organising meetings and generally keeping the show on the road. We are very fortunate to have her services.

Finally, on behalf of all our members, supporters and Trustees, I would like to thank ESAN's outgoing Chairman, Roger Darlington for his excellent work over the last three years. He was a great ambassador for ESAN. He represented ESAN at numerous events; expanded ESAN's engagement beyond the membership; and contributed to the wider policy debate, with two highly successful ESAN conferences kindly hosted by BT at the iconic BT Tower.

Prof Cosmo Graham
September 2019

About ESAN

The Essential Services Access Network (ESAN) is an independent, membership funded organisation. ESAN is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered with the Charity Commission (registered charity number 1157865).

ESAN Aims and Objectives

ESAN's objective is to promote social inclusion for the public benefit by helping to prevent people who are in vulnerable circumstances from being socially excluded from essential services. It covers four of the sectors essential to modern life: water, energy, communications, and financial services.

ESAN is particularly concerned with issues such as access, affordability and vulnerability. In every case we want the consumer voice to be stronger and more influential. At its heart and as its name implies, ESAN is a unique network bringing together regulators and ombudsmen on the one hand and consumer and voluntary groups on the other.

Our quarterly meetings and our monthly newsletters facilitate useful connections and relevant information. From time to time we organise events which extend our work to adjacent sectors such as transport, legal services and health services.

Full membership of ESAN is open to consumer bodies, voluntary organisations and individuals with relevant expertise. ESAN's full members include: Age UK, Antelope Consulting, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Cedar Tree Advisory, Centre for Consumers and Essential Services (University of Leicester), Centre for Sustainable Energy, Christians Against Poverty, Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, the Consumer Council for Water, Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, Different Petal, Money Advice Trust, National Energy Action, StepChange, Toynbee Hall, Turn2Us, and Zoe McLeod.

ESAN also offers an affiliate membership (non-voting) to regulators and other supervisory bodies including: Banking Standards Board, Financial Conduct Authority, Financial Ombudsman Service, Ofcom, Ofgem, Ofwat, Ombudsman Services, and Phone-paid Services Authority. Newsletter only subscriptions are also available.

ESAN Trustees

Prof Cosmo Graham, incoming Chairman and Trustee (appointed April 2019)



Cosmo Graham is a Professor of Law at the Leicester Law School, University of Leicester and Director of the Consumer and Essential Services Unit. He is an expert in law and policy research into the regulation of essential services, with a focus on the representation of the consumer interest, consumers in vulnerable circumstances, and dispute resolution. Previous academic roles in law include Liverpool Polytechnic, University of Sheffield, University of Hull (H K Bevan Professor of Law) and a Nuffield Social Science Research Fellowship (1997-8). Prof Graham was a Member of the European Commission Working Group on vulnerable consumers in the energy sector (2011-16), a Member of Ofwat's Future Regulation Advisory Panel (2011-12), Member of the Competition Commission (1999-2008) and is a Member of Remedies Standing Group, Competition Commission.

Roger Darlington, outgoing Chairman & Trustee (retired April 2019)



Since taking early retirement from his full-time employment as Head of Research at the Communication Workers Union, Roger Darlington spent 16 years as a part-time portfolio worker representing consumers in regulated sectors. He served on a variety of bodies including Postwatch, Consumer Focus, Communications Consumer Panel, Consumer Forum for Communications, DCMS Consumer Expert Group, 4G/TV Coexistence Oversight Board, Good Things Foundation, Internet Watch Foundation, Nominet Policy Stakeholder Committee, EE External Advisory Board, Citizens Advice Post Offices Advisory Group, and South East Water Customer Challenge Group/Customer Panel. He was appointed Chair of the Essential Services Access Network in January 2016 and retired in April 2019.

Matt Vaughan Wilson, Vice-Chairman & Trustee



Matt Vaughan Wilson was elected as Vice Chairman and Trustee of ESAN in October 2015. Matthew is a Partnerships Manager at the Money Advice Trust. Prior to joining the Trust, Matt worked in teaching and research roles at the University of Birmingham, where he completed a PhD in History. Matt worked as a money adviser at National Debtline for several years, before moving into policy and business development roles for the Money Advice Trust. His key areas of interest are the energy and water sectors and small businesses as consumers, particularly in relation to debt and financial difficulty.

Simon Sapper, Treasurer and Trustee



Simon Sapper took up the role of ESAN Treasurer in January 2018. Simon has 30 years' experience as a senior national trade union official in the postal, telecommunications, and facilities management sectors. He has also served on government and industry regulatory bodies associated with legal services, media, and local government, and was an accredited Technical Expert to the European Commission on workplace health and safety. His other areas of expertise include ethics, governance, and civil liberties.

Simon has a Master's degree from the London School of Economics and is also a Low Pay Commissioner, a trustee of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Liberty, and Unions21, and founder of the Makes You Think consultancy.

Kathie Nissan, Trustee



Kathie Nissan is the Corporate Development Manager for the ESAN Member, Turn2us – a charity that fights UK poverty by providing access to benefits, grants and other forms of support to people who are struggling financially. Previous roles include Head of Business Development at legal advice charity LawWorks, Commercial Officer for Cycling UK, Contracts Manager for the Legal Services Commission and Manager of a debt advice centre for Citizens Advice.

ESAN Network Coordinator



Rosalind Stevens has substantial senior policy experience in regulation and consumer affairs operating in UK, European and global markets. Rosalind writes the monthly members' newsletter, manages the members quarterly meetings and special events, and takes care of the general management of ESAN and its website.

Review of the Year

Over the course of the year covered by this report (April 2018 to March 2019), ESAN held four separate meetings for our members. These were kindly hosted by Citizens Advice, Ofgem, Toynbee Hall and Ofcom respectively. We covered a wide range of important topics, including through a series of excellent keynote presentations and roundtable discussions. The meetings were very popular and well attended.

The members' newsletter continues to be a success, both with our members and newsletter subscribers. Our editor, Rosalind Stevens, keeps us up to date with sectoral developments in the provision of essential services to vulnerable consumers as well as within the wider political context.

Outgoing Chairman, Roger Darlington had another busy year promoting ESAN and our members. External events included a conference jointly organised by The Water Report and Indepen, looking at the case for a new social contract for the utilities sectors; and a Public Administration International event, *Better Regulation of the Utilities*, exploring levels of consumer involvement.

Members meetings

24 April 2018, hosted by Citizens Advice

David Stoker, Policy Researcher, Citizens Advice presented the findings of his research report, *Switched on*, published on 20 April 2018. The research focused on ways to improve support for prepayment meter (PPM) customers who self disconnect; looking at the consequences of self disconnection for health and wellbeing.

Caroline Rogers, Policy Researcher, Citizens Advice, then presented her research findings on *Essential services and mental health: how things work in practice*. These identified four main ways in which people with mental health problems struggle.

24 July 2018 hosted by Ofgem

The meeting was hosted by Ofgem at its new offices in Canary Wharf. Nic Robinson, Senior Retail Policy Manager, gave the keynote presentation about Ofgem's work on Quality of service in utility companies. The presentation covered the context of quality of service and the potential impact of legislation to introduce tariff caps; Information published by Ofgem; the role played by Citizens Advice' star ratings and other qualitative surveys that inform Ofgem research; and Ofgem's work to help improve services for customers.

A second presentation by Dr Despoina Mantzari, University of Reading/UCL, summarised Dr Mantzari's research findings to date in relation to economic evidence and discretionary assessments at UK Utility Regulatory Agencies. The presentation explored the role of regulators in promoting competition and the use of data as the main tool for regulatory interventions.

16 October 2018 hosted by Toynbee Hall

The Annual General Meeting, including the quarterly members' meeting, was hosted by Toynbee Hall. Toynbee Hall was originally a settlement house set up by the Barnetts in 1884. Former residents include Charles Robert Ashby, William Beveridge, Clement Attlee, and Vladimir Lenin. Toynbee Hall continues its work today assisting local people. The historic building has been refurbished to attract commercial opportunities to provide ring fenced funding for Toynbee Hall's valuable work.

Dr Xia Lin, of Toynbee Hall gave the keynote presentation. This covered the findings of a one year Toynbee Hall Participatory action research (PAR) project, undertaken by local people for local people. The aim was to find out more about older people's needs in Tower Hamlets, London's most deprived borough for older people.

This was followed by a presentation from Dr Maribel Canto-Lopez, University of Leicester, exploring the consumer interest in voluntary redress in regulated sectors. The research focused on Ofgem's changes to enforcement but also included examples from the financial services, communications and water sectors.

Janine Shackleton, Consumer Council for Water gave the final presentation, *Vulnerability in the water sector - informing, supporting and protecting consumers*. The presentation included a summary of CC Water's findings on progress made by water companies following publication of an Ofwat report and guidance two years before; and CC Water's work on affordability.

15 January 2019, hosted by Ofcom

Katie Hanson gave the keynote presentation about Migration to the Voice over IP Protocol. She explained that the industry led migration was needed to maintain the resilience of the network in the round. The switchover was expected to be straightforward for most, but Ofcom had nevertheless issued guidance to communications providers (CP) requiring more back up in certain areas. CPs are responsible for the migration timetable and timing of notifications.

This was followed by a presentation from Freddie Levett, Ofwat, looking at the regulator's *Vision and Strategy for the water sector*. Ofwat had consulted widely with customers and

stakeholders on their emerging vision, which had also been informed by the customer engagement undertaken by water companies during PR19.

Governance

ESAN has in place a comprehensive but proportionate system of management and controls, which is kept under regular review.

At the Annual General Meeting on 16 October 2018, members unanimously agreed the continuing appointment of the following network officers for a further year:

- Roger Darlington, Chairman
- Matt Vaughan-Wilson, Vice Chairman
- Simon Sapper, Treasurer
- Kathie Nissan, Trustee

Roger Darlington advised that having served for three years as the ESAN Chair, he should step down, but would continue in the role until a suitable replacement had been found.

The Trustees met five times over the course of the year covered by this report (May 2018, June 2018, September 2018, December 2018, Feb 2019) to review governance matters and plan future meetings. Issues discussed included setting the 2018-19 annual budget; a review of membership subscription rates; Trustee induction and training arrangements; appointment of a new Chair; GDPR compliance; promoting newsletter only subscriptions; complaint to the Co-op Bank; promoting ESAN membership; and feedback on the March 2019 ESAN conference

Financial Summary

Summary of accounts

ESAN's financial position continues to be healthy. Its activities are funded by membership subscriptions and by some subscriptions to our regular newsletter. Subscription fees were held at last year's levels following agreement at the 2018 AGM.

We are grateful to members and affiliate members who continue to provide accommodation for ESAN's meetings during the year.

Below is a summary of our financial information for the year to 31st March 2019:

The total income for the year was £ 15,020.32

Total operating expenditure was £13,786.00

Total expenditure relating to Conference £858.00

Net income (income received in the year less expenses incurred in the year) was £1,234.32

Opening bank balance for the financial year was £13,580.31

Closing bank balance for the financial year was £14,595.13

ESAN Income and expenditure 2018-19

ESAN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2018-19	TOTAL
<u>INCOME</u>	£
Membership:	
<i>Individual</i>	330.32
<i>Voluntary/other</i>	2,910.00
<i>Regulator and Statutory</i>	11,200.00
Publication Subscriptions:	
<i>Individual</i>	0
<i>Voluntary/other</i>	0
<i>Corporate</i>	580.00
Other	0
Donations	0
Bank interest	0
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	15,020.32
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£
<i>Fees to network administrator</i>	12,440.00
<i>Web maintenance</i>	488.00
<i>Conference</i>	858.00 (see note 1)
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>	13,786.00
<u>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</u>	1,234.32
Bank balance	
<i>Opening at 01 Apr 2018</i>	£13,580.31
<i>Closing at 31 Mar 2019</i>	£14,595.13 (see note 2)

Notes

1 £858.80 of Conference expenses from 2017/18 were debited after 31 March 2018, and are therefore shown in this report/set of accounts.

2 Of this sum, £11,688,86 is committed.