

# Financial Services Consumer Panel

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR CONSUMERS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Telephone: 020 7066 9346  
Email: [enquiries@fs-cp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fs-cp.org.uk)

Help to Save Consultation  
Pensions and Savings Team  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

20 July 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Help to Save: consultation on implementation**

This is the Financial Services Consumer Panel's response to HM Treasury's consultation on the implementation of Help to Save.

The Panel welcomes Help to Save. The advantages of government bonuses as a saving incentive are well proven, as the evaluation of the Saving Gateway Pilots demonstrated.

It is important for Help to Save accounts to be easily accessible. The NS&I brand is trusted as a financial services provider. However, we agree with concerns raised in the consultation regarding lack of branch access. Those consumers who need this initiative most typically rely more on branch networks than other consumers. This suggests that at least some providers should provide branch access. For this reason, we believe that they should be available through multiple providers. We agree interest should be paid on balances. Multiple providers would introduce an element of competition on interest rates.

Account information and promotional materials should be written in clear language with transparent information on interest rates, fees and charges. Consumers must be able to understand the difference between the interest paid, and the government bonus, which is unlikely to be paid until the account matures. It should be easy for consumers to calculate the amount of interest and bonus earned.

Consumers should be able to switch accounts mid-term to ensure they don't get stuck in a poor value account. We understand that this would increase the complexity of the accounts, so at the very least, consumers who choose to save for the additional two years should have the option of moving their funds at that stage, to another Help to Save account, without losing out on potential returns.

The Panel supports the proposal to set a default option for Help to Save accounts to roll-over into a follow-on savings account on maturity. However, in keeping with the treating customers fairly principle, this follow-on savings account should be the highest paying instant access account offered by the provider.

Yours sincerely

Sue Lewis  
Chair  
Financial Services Consumer Panel