

News story: Tech merger may reduce options for people with communication needs

Tobii and Smartbox design and supply technology to enable people with complex speech and language needs to communicate – known as augmentative and assistive communication solutions. These solutions include specialised hardware and software, such as alarm systems, speech generating devices and hearing technologies.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that Tobii and Smartbox are leading suppliers in this sector and are each other's main competitor. The CMA is concerned that the merged company would face little competition, which could lead to a reduced range of products being offered, higher prices and fewer new products being developed.

Mike Walker, Chief Economic Advisor, said:

These are vital technologies bought on behalf of vulnerable people by the NHS, charities and schools.

We believe that the merger could stifle innovation and lead to less choice. We will launch a further in-depth investigation if the companies fail to address our concerns.

Protecting vulnerable consumers is at the heart of the CMA's [Annual Plan](#), as reflected by its other recent work in areas such as [funerals](#), [care homes](#) and [online gambling](#).

Tobii and Smartbox now have until 1 February 2019 to offer solutions to resolve the CMA's concerns, otherwise the merger will be referred for a Phase 2 investigation.

More information can be found on the [Tobii / Smartbox case page](#).