

**Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel (CCP) and Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People (ACOD)**

**13 March 2025, 10:30 - 15:20**

**Meeting held in hybrid format via Microsoft Teams**

**Present**

CCP/ACOD (The Panel)

Helen Froud (Chair)

Rachel Burr (Member for Wales)

Judith Clifton

Lenna Cumberbatch

Grant Davis

Michelle Goddard

Robert Hammond (Member for England)

Rhian Johns

Carrie Matchett (Member for Northern Ireland)

David Warburton-Broadhurst

Michael Wardlow

Apologies

None

In attendance for the duration of the meeting

The Panel's Executive Team

Will Harding (Ofcom Board Member, attending as an observer)

UK Regulators Network's 'Next Generation Non-Executive Directors' (NEDs) scheme member

In attendance for Items 6 and 7 only

Ofcom's Director for Northern Ireland

Representatives of the Ofcom Northern Ireland Policy team

Representatives of Ofcom's Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland

An additional observer from the UK Regulators Network's 'Next Generation Non-Executive Directors' (NEDs) scheme.



Item
<p><b>1. Welcome and introduction</b></p> <p>1.1 The Chair welcomed Ofcom's Board Member, Panel Members and attendees to the meeting.</p> <p>1.2 Housekeeping information was provided to participants.</p>
<p><b>2. Declarations of Members' interests</b></p> <p>2.1 There were no declarations of interest.</p>
<p><b>3. Minutes of the meeting on 12 and 13 February 2025 and matters arising</b></p> <p>3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 12 and 13 February 2025 were <b>APPROVED</b> as a true and accurate reflection.</p>
<p><b>4. Chair's update</b></p> <p>4.1 The Chair and Members provided an overview of the Panel's recent activity and stakeholder engagement across the UK since the last meeting held on 12 and 13 February, in Cardiff.</p> <p>4.2 Members received an update from the Ofcom Board member on current consultations and statements relevant to the Panel's remit.</p>
<p><b>5. Consumer Policy update</b></p> <p>5.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom's consumer policy team on its key consumer priority areas.</p> <p>5.2 Members relayed concern with the seemingly low uptake of social tariffs and highlighted that consumers struggling financially are impacted by a high mental load when they are constantly dealing with debt management. The Panel suggested Ofcom view a recent paper by Citizens Advice which emphasises the impacts on mental health when negotiating 'hidden deals', or <a href="#">haggling in the telecoms market</a>.</p> <p>5.3 Panel Members look forward to viewing Ofcom's information (when published) promoting the awareness of debt and disconnection measures across telecoms and post for consumers with disabilities.</p> <p>5.4 The Panel remain concerned with the delay to the One Touch Switch (OTS) scheme's implementation and urge Ofcom to continue to view the data and consider taking action against industry if necessary.</p>

5.5 Members look forward to learning more about how and when Ofcom will deliver a more realistic representation of available mobile coverage and its performance to consumers.

5.6 The Panel requested an update on how the Shared Rural Network is progressing against its published aims.

## **6. CCP/ACOD update to the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland (ACNI)**

6.1 Introductions were made between the Communications Consumer Panel/Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People and Ofcom's Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland (ACNI).

## **7. Postal Universal Service Obligation (USO) Update (shared with ACNI)**

7.1 The Panel and ACNI received an update on the work Ofcom is undertaking in relation to the UK's universal postal service, in determining the needs of consumers ahead of making any changes to the USO.

7.2 Members highlighted that many consumers who rely on sending mail are struggling to afford postal services and advised that any reform should ensure postal users are not financially disadvantaged.

7.3 Panel Members queried whether postal users in rural areas who had taken part in Ofcom's research had reported less dissatisfaction due to lower expectations, resulting from consistently poor quality of service.

7.4 However, the Panel recognised that within rural areas of the UK, the postal operative provides more than a delivery service to their neighbourhood.

7.5 The Panel highlighted the social benefits of the postal service, including consistency and a sense of community to potentially isolated individuals.

7.6 Members expressed their concern that as jobs may be scarcer in rural areas, there may be a risk of 'posties' feeling forced to accept new and less advantageous contract changes to their existing role.

7.7 The Panel reiterated their advice that postal users require a reliable and regular service especially when they rely on post as their only means of communication. Panel Members highlighted as an example, short notice medical appointment changes, which may result in consumers missing an appointment for treatment or being diagnosed with a condition unnecessarily late.

7.8 While noting the findings of Ofcom's consumer research, published alongside their consultation document, the Panel highlighted that consumer demographics should be considered carefully when reviewing the USO, to protect individuals who lack digital skills and access to reliable digital connectivity.

7.9 Panel Members advised that the proposals Ofcom had published, which were based on proposal by Royal Mail, would risk causing postal user confusion, as recipients would need to understand the pattern of delivery in their area over a two-week period.



Members urged Ofcom to consider and investigate what effective feedback mechanisms are in place for consumers.

7.10 Panel Members questioned whether some communities living outside of an urban environment would be disproportionately disadvantaged due to post collection and delivery delays.

7.11 Members queried the proportion of Northern Ireland participants within postal research and voiced concerns over whether the proposed consultation fully addressed the requirements of delivering a fully future proofed service for consumers.

## **8. Public Policy update**

8.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on the key public policy developments since the previous update in November 2024.

8.2 In relation to learning about [‘Daisy’](#), the Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovative tool being used to tackle scams and fraud, the Panel were keen to know whether other innovative tools were being used in the marketplace to act as a deterrent.

8.3 The Panel requested information on Ofcom’s approach to AI.

8.4 The Panel requested information on whether climate change resilience had been discussed within the telecoms sector.

## **9. Migration to Voice over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Power Resilience update**

9.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on the Migration to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and network resilience, when power outages impact networks and infrastructure.

9.2 Panel Members expressed disquiet about the identification of consumers who may require additional support during or after migration. Panel Members highlighted that some consumers may not be receiving the assistance they need as Communications Providers (CPs) rely on customers self-identifying as ‘vulnerable’.

9.3 In addition, Panel Members highlighted a consumers’ vulnerability is not a fixed state, is transitory and can change.

9.4 The Panel urged Ofcom to use their persuasive powers to inspire CPs to better engage with their customers to promote awareness and explain the implications of how migration to VoIP could impact them or someone they care for.

9.5 Panel Members advised that the Government, Ofcom and industry should seek to learn lessons from the migration journey so far to provide a rich picture of who has been disadvantaged throughout the process and prevent future harm.

9.6 Furthermore, the Panel emphasised better messaging across networks and sectors should be considered as Storm Éowyn provided an example of the lack of resilience structure, especially within Northern Ireland, as thousands of consumers were left without power for weeks.

9.7 The Panel advised that there was anecdotal evidence of consumers being migrated and ‘upgraded’ resulting in a change of telephone number that they were unaware of



until other people tried to contact them. Panel Members would provide specific details with informed consent from consumers when made aware of further events.	
<b>10. CCP/ACOD Plan of Work and Research plan for 2025/2026</b>	
10.1	The Panel discussed areas of focus and potential research projects for the year ahead.
<b>11. CCP/ACOD Postal USO Consultation Response Discussion</b>	
11.1	The Panel discussed and formulated a view on Ofcom's consultation: Review of the universal postal service, in readiness for issuing a response by the deadline date of 10 April 2025.
<b>12. Ofcom's approach to Enforcement</b>	
12.1	The Panel received an overview on how enforcement underpins Ofcom's regulatory functions and how those interventions have a meaningful and lasting effect for UK citizens.
12.2	The Panel asked questions around Ofcom's broader enforcement work, including online safety, aimed at protecting consumers, citizens and microbusinesses.
<b>13. Any Other Business</b>	
13.1	There was no other business