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

15 May 2025, 10:30 – 15:35

Meeting held in hybrid format via Microsoft Teams

Present
<u>CCP/ACOD (The Panel)</u>
Helen Froud (Chair)
Rachel Burr (Member for Wales)
Judith Clifton (up to item 5)
Lenna Cumberbatch
Grant Davis
Michelle Goddard
Robert Hammond (Member for England)
Rhian Johns
Carrie Matchett (Member for Northern Ireland)
David Warburton-Broadhurst
Michael Wardlow (from Item 5 onwards)

<u>Apologies</u>
none

<u>In attendance for the duration of the meeting</u>
The Panel's Executive Team
UK Regulators Network's 'Next Generation Non-Executive Directors' (NEDs) scheme member
Representative from the NSPCC (item 10 only)

Item
1. Welcome and introduction   1.1 The Chair welcomed Panel Members and attendees to the meeting.
2. Declarations of Members' interests   2.1 David Warburton-Broadhurst declared his new Non-Executive Director role as Chair of the Board of Trustees for Veterans into Logistics, commencing 22 April 2025.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 10 April 2025 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 10 April 2025 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate reflection following a minor amendment.

3.2 The Panel wished to note that its WhatsApp chat group, which members and team could choose to be a member of, had been set up to assist Members as a communication aid and not for official business purposes. Members and team could use this to share non-confidential information for convenience. It was noted that the Panel's official business channels were via secure email and Teams facilities.

3.3 It was also noted that for the WhatsApp group to be considered 'optional', any important information should, and would, be shared through an official business channel, so that no member would be left unaware.

4. Chair's update

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 10 April.

4.2 Members commented on potentially difficult and distressing subject matters in the Online Safety space and discussed the possibility of taking a proactive approach that would empower them to engage with policy in this area. The Panel noted the need to safely manage potentially 'triggering' topics.

4.3 A member suggested an organisation that provided such services; the team would research relevant options.

5. Consumer Policy update

5.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom's consumer policy team on its key consumer policy areas.

5.2 Panel Members are keen to receive an update from Ofcom on its Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) review, especially the non-confidential responses received from their Consultation: Review of ADR in the telecoms sector.

5.3 Referring to Ofcom's published report in December 2024 on pricing trends for communcations services, the Panel look forward to Ofcom's next update on social tariff availability and take-up as soon as it becomes available.

5.4 The Panel reflected on the useful benchmark that had been set by Ofcom's Fairness for Customers commitments report in May 2021, and questioned whether any plans were in place for Ofcom to return to monitor phone and broadband providers against those principles.

5.5 The Panel urged Ofcom to continue to examine the degree of fairness demonstrated by communications providers, and assess the impact to consumers who may find themselves being underserved by the industry.

5.6 Members provided an observation in relation to the telephone preference service (TPS) with scam calls from rogue numbers still prevalent, and questioned what

processes were in place to monitor and reduce the number of calls being made. An update from Ofcom's scams team would take place at an upcoming meeting.

5.7 Members noted the number of data breaches currently occuring across high profile businesses and queried if Ofcom had any plans or opportunities in place to restrict targeted breaches in this sector.

5.8 The Panel were pleased to learn of the number of successful switchers who had used the One Touch Switch (OTS) facility since launch in order to get a better deal. The Panel welcomed Ofcom's monitoring and collaboration with communications providers to learn from difficulties around data matching, to ensure OTS worked for consumers. They urged Ofcom to continue to monitor and share any learnings within this space for any future activities.

5.9 The Panel remain deeply concerned with the recommencement of certain tranches of consumers' migration to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and urged Ofcom to ensure that shared learning was taking place across the sector, from previous consumer experiences throughout the migration journey.

5.10 The Panel highlighted continued difficulties for consumers who have additional needs that would need to be given consideration during migration, whether medical, geographic, financial or due to moving house or caring for someone living in a different area of the UK. In some of these contexts consumers may technically be 'opting' to switch and the Panel highlighted the importance of communications providers understanding and taking into account these additional needs when migration consumers 'voluntarily' who may have little other choice.

5.11 Members reiterated concerns that any complaint data held on the topic of migration to VOIP may become misleading, because some consumers will be unaware that they have been 'migrated' and some will not endure the difficulty of reporting their dissatisfaction.

5.12 The Panel look forward to receiving an update from Ofcom on the migration to VoIP and asked for details about the Government-Ofcom co-branded national telecare awareness campaign, such as whether the branding would include devolved nations' branding as well as that of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), how the scheme will be delivered and which channels will be used.

5.13 In relation to mobile coverage and the reporting thereof, the Panel asked Ofcom whether any demographic data is being collected as part of its user testing in addition to the numbers of people using assistive technologies.

5.14 Members relayed concerns about the lack of connectivity on public transport, especially trains, and advised that greater improvement is required. This would help to drive economic growth and encourage more people to travel by train.

5.15 The Panel look forward to receiving an update on the Shared Rural Network very soon.

5.16 Members continue to relay concerns on the mobile 2G/3G switch-off and look forward to receiving an update soon.

5.17 The Panel remain concerned with the Quality of Service (QoS) consumers are experiencing with postal services and relayed frustration in the responses so far

received, plus look forward to receiving an update on Postal Monitoring and QoS soon.

5.18   Members await more detail on discussions around improving service performance in Post and the tools Ofcom could use to drive better performance for consumers.

6. Direct-to-Device: Improving connectivity from Sky and Space

6.1 The Panel received an overview from Ofcom on the direct-to-device (D2D) service including the evolution of the provision, its benefits and how the service is being developed globally.

6.2 Members were pleased to learn how D2D could benefit and assist consumers especially in emergency situations and asked about the quality of the service, compared to that of a satellite telephone.

6.3 Members probed Ofcom on the future D2D service costs as concerns were raised on behalf of consumers who either struggle financially or live in a more rural or remote location, who have difficulty with connectivity. The Panel advised that many consumers would be doubly disadvantaged in not being able to use the service if the future pricing point is not carefully considered.

6.4 The Panel urged Ofcom to ensure safeguards are in place to protect how such packages are presented and marketed to consumers and to ensuring transparency and cyber security is incorporated.

7. Ofcom's 3-Year Plan of Work 2025-2028

7.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on how they set out their [plans and priorities for the next three years](#) by making communications work for everyone.

7.2 Members asked questions around broadband infrastructure assurances, availability, how the D2D service related to the 3-year plan, and whether the concept of mis and dis-information had been considered.

7.3 Members questioned whether consumers' fair and affordable access to communications services had been incorporated within the plan as no reference had been made within the material provided and advised Ofcom that these principles should be a cross-cutting priority for the regulator.

7.4 The Panel queried whether Ofcom had set out too many priorities to achieve within the time frame in order to deliver a robust regulatory service for consumers.

7.5 Members relayed deep concerns with the seemingly invisible protections for consumers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances or consumers who are repeatedly underserved by the industry.

7.6 Members asked what Equality Impact Assessment had been performed by Ofcom when designing its strategy, to ensure that the strategy would make communications work for everyone.

7.7 The Panel urged Ofcom to use its statutory consumer panel and advisory committees as a consultation mechanism early on in the next round of strategic plans, to ensure the consumer voice is considered and heard early on in design and not retrofitted into Ofcom's plans and projects later on.

8. Mobile Radio Access Network (RAN) resilience to power outages

8.1 The Panel received an overview from Ofcom on the mobile radio access network resilience during power outages with the aim of setting out practices in architecture, design and operational aspects that underpin resilient telecoms networks and services.

8.2 Members inquired as to Ofcom's priority areas of focus in delivering robust and resilient networks across the UK.

8.3 Members conveyed the importance of not neglecting peoples' need to contact friends and family during an emergency situation, and that these 'critical calls' must be deemed a priority equal to contacting an emergency service.

8.4 The Panel raised questions around physical infrastructure and the consequences of power outages in areas covered by multiple masts and recommendations of levels of overlap on cell sizes.

8.5 Members were interested in discussions around battery backup timescales and the levels of resilience in keeping services running during local power outages, plus whether power over fibre (PoF) solutions or other options could assist in the future.

8.6 The Panel raised an observation in relation to planning constraints in Northern Ireland.

8.7 Members highlighted concerns around resilience of mobile masts, in relation to a lack of consumer awareness of the migration to VOIP.

8.8 Members feared that providers would automatically consider a consumer who has a mobile device would be resilient during an outage, irrespective of a consumer's ability to use it. The Panel reiterated to Ofcom that consumers need to better understand the importance in making plans if they find themselves in a vulnerable situation and require additional support.

8.9 The Panel trust Ofcom to ensure robust governance and testing is in place to make sure resilient solutions work for everyone and that fixed and mobile connectivity is looked at holistically to guarantee consumers are not migrated to VoIP if coverage is inadequate.

9. Enforcement update

9.1 Ofcom's Enforcement team provided Members with an update on Ofcom's investigations and enforcement programme across all work areas including Online Safety.

9.2 The Panel asked questions around the current enforcement work aimed at protecting consumers, citizens and microbusinesses.

10.   Introduction to the work of the NSPCC

10.1   A representative from the NSPCC provided an overview of the work undertaken by the charity with the aim of keeping every child safe from harm, by preventing abuse, helping rebuild children's lives and supporting families.

10.2 Members were enlightened by the NSPCC's work on Child Safety Online (CSO), and how the charity uses its research and evidence to shape policy.

10.3 Members were particularly interested to hear how the NSPCC harnesses the Voice of Online Youth and the CSO Taskforce to help drive change within the Online Safety space.

10.4 The Panel looks forward to deepening its relationship with the NSPCC to protect the lives of children online.

11.   Any Other Business

11.1   There was no other business