

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

16 September 2026, 10:30 - 15:35

Meeting held in hybrid format via Microsoft Teams

Present

CCP/ACOD (The Panel)

Helen Froud (Chair)

Rachel Burr (Member for Wales)

Grant Davis

Rhian Johns

Carrie Matchett (Member for Northern Ireland)

Sarah O'Neill (Member for Scotland)

David Warburton-Broadhurst

Michael Wardlow

Apologies

Robert Hammond (Member for England)

In attendance for the duration of the meeting

The Panel's Executive Team

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

Item
1. Welcome and Introduction 1.1 The Chair welcomed the Next Gen NED and Panel Members to the meeting.
2. Declarations of Members' interests 2.1 Helen Froud declared that she will shortly commence a part-time, self-funded PhD in Divinity with the University of Edinburgh. 2.2 Rachel Burr declared that she had recently commenced a new role as Head of Wales for Macmillan Cancer Support. 2.3 The Panel noted the declarations, and no conflicts of interest were identified in relation to the agenda items in discussion.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 16 July 2026 and matters arising

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of **16 July 2026** were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to a minor amendment.
- 3.2 Members discussed the statutory requirement under the Communications Act 2003 for the Panel to include representation from each UK nation and expressed concern that the current Wales member's term of appointment would be due to expire on 31 December 2026 if no extension or reappointment was granted by DCMS.
- 3.3 Panel members discussed ways that mobile connectivity is measured across the UK and considered the merits of applying a different benchmark for each individual UK nation rather than relying on UK-wide averages for mobile coverage. It was noted that overall coverage figures can mask significant disparities, with some areas experiencing substantially lower levels of connectivity than the national average. Members also considered rural and urban differences and what actions the Panel could take to help ensure that no area is left behind. The view was expressed that Ofcom should consider setting separate targets for each nation across communications services, including not only mobile connectivity but also postal services, to better reflect regional circumstances and to ensure that underserved areas are identified and addressed.
- 3.4 Members noted that artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evolve rapidly and described it as a 'moving target' for regulators and consumer bodies. Discussion focused on identifying where the Panel can have the greatest impact and add value, particularly in ensuring that consumer interests remain protected as AI technologies develop and become more widely adopted.
- 3.5 The Panel expressed interest in a future agenda session on Telephony Exchange Closure. Concerns were raised that trials undertaken to date may not fully reflect real-world conditions, particularly in relation to physical infrastructure and service continuity. Members highlighted the importance of understanding the practical implications for consumers and communities as the programme progresses.
- 3.6 Members noted the letter that Ofcom had sent to Communications Providers (CPs) in relation to the awareness and take-up of social tariffs. The Panel reiterated the importance of ensuring that affordable and effective communication services remain accessible to consumers who find themselves in financially vulnerable circumstances. Members were concerned that Ofcom's letter understated the dimensions of inclusion missed by consumers who have been and are being affected by the cost-of-living crisis, for whom additional support must be provided by their providers to enable them to engage fully in society.

4. Chair's Update

- 4.1 The Chair and Panel Members discussed the Panel's recent activity and stakeholder engagement across the UK since the last meeting held on 16 July.
- 4.2 A member had shared with Ofcom a presentation on the use of satellite as contingency for reduced 2G coverage, which had been presented to Ofcom in August and was reported to have been well received as part of Ofcom's 'Connectivity you can count on' workstream. Feedback highlighted the value of the Panel's engagement with the

issues, and Members who were less familiar with satellite technology were advised that a follow-up teach-in session could be arranged if required.

- 4.3 The discussion focused on the upcoming 2G switch-off and the role satellite non-terrestrial networks could play in supporting rural connectivity, network resilience and universal coverage. Members noted the potential benefits for critical national infrastructure, including maritime services, and heard that increased market competition should help reduce consumer costs over time. The importance of maintaining affordability and appropriate consumer protections was emphasised.
- 4.4 The Panel discussed the emerging issue of AI companions and the potential risks associated with their use. Reference was made to the proposed social media ban for under-16s expected in the spring, with Members noting the growing evidence of consumer harm arising from digital platforms across all age groups. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity for the Panel to consider these issues proactively and contribute to discussions before harms become more widespread.
- 4.5 Members discussed how the Panel develops and communicates its views, suggesting that technical expertise presented to the Panel could be used to inform advice notes where appropriate. It was agreed that a tiered system of formal outputs should be considered by the Panel before being shared with stakeholders such as Ofcom, Government or industry.
- 4.6 Related to the previous point, Members also considered how more of the Panel's work could be made publicly available, including through advice papers, policy positions and challenge papers, as well as speaking events. It was suggested that a framework paper would be helpful to clarify the Panel's various outputs, processes and overall purpose.

5. Panel Deep Dive on Consumer Supervision

- 5.1 The Panel decided to discuss Consumer Supervision matters at the next scheduled meeting. The Exec team invited Members to share comments on consumer supervision by email in the meantime.

6. Deep Dive: Migration from PSTN to VoIP update

- 6.1 The Panel discussed the ongoing migration from PSTN to VoIP services and raised a number of concerns about the potential impact on consumers, particularly vulnerable and underserved groups, with less than five months left of the formal project. Key concerns and points raised included:
 - While acknowledging progress, Members felt that several issues remained unanswered, including the arrangements for consumers who will remain reliant on copper networks in areas not expected to receive fibre coverage for a number of years.
 - Concerns were expressed that the quality of service on existing copper infrastructure is already poor and that greater clarity is needed on how these consumers will be supported during the transition period.
 - Members also questioned whether alternative products have been sufficiently tested before being rolled out to vulnerable consumer groups.
 - Concerns were raised about the risks of significantly higher legacy line pricing as migration progresses.

- Members agreed to engage directly with Openreach, including gaining a better understanding of its consumer awareness campaign, noting that there appeared to be limited public awareness of planned advertising activity.
- The discussion also focused on oversight and accountability. Members welcomed indications that Ofcom is aware of the issues being raised but questioned whether sufficient contingency arrangements would be in place should problems arise.
- The Panel highlighted the need for effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms to identify consumer harm, understand its scale and ensure appropriate action is taken.
- Members agreed that further consideration should be given to how consumer outcomes are tracked throughout the migration process and noted that current solutions may address immediate issues but do not fully resolve longer-term challenges.

7. Migration from PSTN to VoIP update

7.1 The Panel received an update on the activities Ofcom had undertaken on the migration from PSTN to VoIP since the last update in February 2026.

7.2 Members raised concerns about the consumer experience, particularly for consumers in vulnerable situations and those being moved onto replacement products. The Panel requested further information on migration processes, including for KCOM Group customers, and advised Ofcom that customer feedback from completed migrations would provide valuable insight into outcomes.

7.3 Concerns were raised regarding affordability for consumers remaining on legacy products who face increasing costs without fully understanding the financial implications of not migrating. Members noted that some consumers may be unable to negotiate alternative arrangements, including social tariffs, and that there could be unintended disadvantages if providers do not clearly communicate the consequences of remaining on legacy services - and some consumers may not have the choice of migrating so may be subject to increased costs with no competition. The Panel seek to understand from Ofcom whether this is being clearly communicated to consumers and what protections are in place.

7.4 The Panel also highlighted whether a recent equality impact assessment had been completed and questioned whether sufficient consideration had been given to unintended consumer detriment and appropriate mitigation measures. A member advised that the original UK government equality impact assessment had taken place in 2011.

7.5 The Panel discussed the need for more robust monitoring of migration outcomes and consumer experiences. Members observed that consumers are often more likely to raise concerns through social media channels rather than through their Communication Provider or Ofcom, making Ofcom's complaints data alone an insufficient measure of success.

- 7.6 Concerns were raised about a range of potential failures during the migration process, including service outages, missed engineer appointments, installation issues and poor customer service. Members stressed the importance of understanding the full consumer journey and ensuring there are effective mechanisms to identify and address poor outcomes.
- 7.7 Members asked whether Ofcom receives sufficiently detailed and robust data from communications providers to assess whether migration processes are being carried out correctly and to investigate any future concerns about consumer harm. The discussion also highlighted the importance of understanding how customer experience information is shared and used within Ofcom, and whether lessons from other large-scale transition programmes could be applied to improve oversight.
- 7.8 The reliability of copper networks for consumers who will remain on legacy services was also discussed. Members requested further information on how the performance and resilience of these networks are being monitored during the transition period.
- 7.9 It was agreed that the Panel would welcome a future update on progress, including evidence of customer experiences, monitoring arrangements and migration outcomes. This would take place in the first quarter of 2027.

8. Panel Research Recommendations: 'Moving Home, Staying Connected' Report

- 8.1 The Panel discussed how best to maximise the impact of the research findings and its impact. Members identified strong links with previous consumer research and suggested that findings should be presented alongside related work to highlight common themes and systemic issues. There was broad support for producing clear headline findings, practical recommendations and accessible summary materials to complement the full report.
- 8.2 Discussion focused on the importance of presenting experiences through the consumer lens, recognising that communications issues are often experienced alongside other life events and challenges. There was also interest in using the findings to encourage greater collaboration across Ofcom, communications providers, government and third-sector organisations.
- 8.3 Members agreed that it would be useful to share the report, with a short summary, with communications providers, homelessness organisations, consumer support bodies and policymakers, with a focus on both raising awareness and driving practical improvements for consumers moving home.
- 8.4 The Panel agreed to convene to prepare communications and stakeholder engagement plans ahead of commissioning new research.

9. Panel Research Plan 2026/27

- 9.1 The Panel discussed the importance of developing future research proposals with clear objectives, target audiences and engagement plans identified from the outset. Members agreed that research should support the Panel's overarching goal of improving consumer experiences and ensuring that no-one is left behind.

- 9.2 Potential future topics were discussed alongside highlighting opportunities to contribute consumer insight to emerging Ofcom projects and expressed interest in understanding how the Panel can better measure and demonstrate its impact.
- 9.3 Some potential research topics highlighted were social tariffs/affordability of communications services for financially excluded consumers, AI companions, complaints and ADR in online safety and communications services in climate resilience. The Panel would reconvene in October.

10. Panel Deep Dive: Post update

- 10.1 The Panel discussed a range of issues relating to postal service reforms and their potential impact on consumers, particularly vulnerable and underserved groups. Members sought an update on Royal Mail's transformation programme, including progress across sorting offices and preparedness for the Christmas 2026 period.
- 10.2 The Chair advised Members that she had been invited by Royal Mail to observe a sorting office to better understand operational changes.
- 10.3 Members questioned the role of Ofcom in delivering proposed postal reforms and whether existing enforcement measures were sufficient. Concerns were raised that previous financial penalties had not driven the desired improvements, and members asked what alternative approaches or additional powers might be available should service performance continue to fall short and the Panel would seek input from Ofcom's Enforcement team at their next meeting. The Panel noted comments in the media about the pros and cons of re-nationalisation.
- 10.4 The Panel discussed proposals for a targeted discount scheme for vulnerable consumers and questioned how vulnerability would be defined in practice. Members noted concerns that the proposal could distract from broader affordability issues and queried whether changes to the Universal Service Obligation could ultimately lead to the erosion of second-class service protections. Members also requested greater visibility of information relating to postal affordability reviews and associated consumer impacts.
- 10.5 Further discussion focused on parcel services, including Royal Mail's future plans in this area. Members discussed concerns regarding parcel tracking capabilities, noting that consumers are often able to track deliveries with other couriers but may experience less visibility with Royal Mail services. The potential for regional disparities in service quality was also raised.
- 10.6 Members requested information on Christmas volume forecasts, noting expectations of declining letter volumes, growing parcels volumes but increased recruitment activity to support peak demand. They also asked whether delivery projections were available to inform future discussions.

11. Post update

- 11.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on the affordability and pricing of postal USO services including the postal supervision programme.
- 11.2 Members discussed postal sector developments, focusing on parcel services, affordability measures and quality of service performance. Members sought clarification on the future

direction of Royal Mail's parcel services and highlighted ongoing concerns regarding consumer experiences and complaint resolution in the postal sector.

11.3 Discussion also covered potential targeted discount schemes for consumers in vulnerable circumstances, with members questioning how such proposals would align with universal service principles.

11.4 Members welcomed efforts to improve the monitoring of regional service quality performance and noted the importance of understanding geographical variations in delivery outcomes.

11.5 The Panel raised questions regarding trends in mail volumes, affordability pressures and the availability of parcel tracking services, and encouraged continued scrutiny of consumer outcomes and service performance as postal market reforms progress.

12. Any other business

12.1 Members had received a request from a member of the public, requesting their signature to be added to a position paper. The Chair stated that while the Panel's position on an issue might be in line with that stated in a position paper, it was not within the Panel's remit to publicly endorse a campaign. However, the Panel could still provide advice to Ofcom and others on issues where more consumer support was needed and could refer to other organisations campaigns as additional evidence of consumer harm.