

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 21 March 2024 at 10.30 am

Meeting held in hybrid format at Riverside House and via Microsoft Teams

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Rick Hill (Chair)

Kay Allen

Amanda Britain

Rachel Burr

Judith Clifton

Lenna Cumberbatch

Helen Froud

Michelle Goddard

Robert Hammond

Michael Wardlow

Apologies

Richard Spencer

In attendance

The Panel's Executive Team

Ofcom colleagues

Representatives from UK Safer Internet Centre (item 9)

Representative from Futuresight (item 10)

Item
1. Welcome and introduction
1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting.
2. Declarations of Members' interests
2.1 Rick Hill declared an interest due to his recent ministerial appointment to the Irish communications sector regulator, ComReg's Regulatory Adjudication Panel.



3. Minutes of the meeting on 15 February 2024 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 15 February 2024 were **APPROVED** following minor amendment.

4. Chair's update

- 4.1 The Chair and National Members provided an overview of the Panel's recent activity and stakeholder engagement across the UK.
- 4.2 The Panel discussed the implications for consumers in readiness to respond to Ofcom's Call for input: The future of the universal postal service.
- 4.3 The complexities of the telecare sector were discussed by the Panel in connection with the migration to VoIP.

5. Consumer Policy update

- 5.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom's consumer policy team on its key consumer priority areas.
- 5.2 Members are keen to learn more about Ofcom's work in ADR compliance.
- 5.3 The Panel was interested to hear how Ofcom intends to promote awareness to consumers with disabilities on available assistance with debt, across telecoms, broadcasting and post and is keen to view the market research findings.
- 5.4 The Panel re-iterated the need for an ADR scheme within Online Safety to provide consumers and citizens with an independent organisation to assess complaints between a customer and platform.
- 5.5 The affordability of communications services remains a significant point of interest to the Panel.
- 5.6 The Panel raised concerns with the delay to the implementation of One Touch Switching and questioned if the revised implementation date would be achievable.
- 5.7 The lack of a national campaign to promote the awareness of the migration to VoIP remains of grave concern to the Panel and the Panel discussed topline findings from the latest round of research that they had commissioned.
- 5.8 The Panel is keen to learn how the Shared Rural Network (SRN) is progressing and would welcome an update at a future meeting.



6. Exploring Best Practise in Inclusive Research

6.1 Members received an overview of the emerging findings from the Panel's research on exploring best practise in inclusive research. The Panel noted the findings from the recent round of interviews and stakeholder workshop with interest and looked forward to a full report from April/May onwards.

7. Update on Tackling Scam Calls

7.1 The Panel received an update on Ofcom's approach to detecting and blocking spoofed numbers/spam calls and SMS messages, including the use of Calling Line Identification (CLI) Authentication.

7.2 The Panel referred to consumers' use of the 7726 short code for alerting providers to scam calls and texts. Members asked whether data was gathered through this reporting mechanism and shared with organisations that could make use of it.

8. Enforcement Update

8.1 Ofcom's Enforcement team provided Members with an update on Ofcom's enforcement and compliance monitoring programme, including its investigation into compliance rules relating to ensuring uninterrupted access to emergency organisations and treatment of consumers with additional needs during migration to VoIP. The Panel once again re-enforced the benefits of industry and government providing a national campaign to boost consumers' awareness of the transition.

8.2 Members also raised ongoing concern over the continued delays to the One Touch Switching Programme. The Panel highlighted to Ofcom's Enforcement team the detrimental cost of the delay to consumers, which is mounting as the delay continues. Members urged Ofcom to calculate this cost and to take it into consideration in any future analysis.

9. Introduction to the UK Safer Internet Centre and need for an Online Safety ADR scheme

9.1 Representatives from the UK Safer Internet Centre highlighted to Members the implications of the absence of an Alternative Dispute Resolution within an online world, which they said will leave thousands of online users at an increased risk of harm. Under the current Video Sharing Platform (VSP) regulation users can make independent appeals, however the implementation of the Online Safety Act will remove that right.

9.2 The Panel raised questions as to why Ofcom require two years to roll out an ADR scheme for online users. Evidence presented by the UK Safer Internet



Centre detailed users were not motivated by receiving compensation like other ADR schemes to resolve a complaint, but resolution based i.e. wanted content removed and confirmation a reoccurrence would not occur. Users would like to see redress fed into policy changes.

10. Panel research update: Urban (inner city) and Microbusiness (Futuresight)

10.1 A representative from Futuresight provided Members with an overview of preliminary findings from the Panel's two research projects - urban (inner city) consumers' experiences in the communications sector; and experiences of telecommunications and postal services among micro-businesses in the UK. The Panel looked forward to receiving a final report and video in due course, to form the basis of a set of policy recommendations.

11. AOB

11.1 The Panel's completion of its strategy and Plan of Work for 2024/2025 was imminent and Members were asked for final comments before consultation with stakeholders.