



JANUARY 2018 BULLETIN

## Update on Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD activities

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The end of 2017, and the start of 2018, has been a busy time for the Panel. Jo Connell, Panel Chair, attended the Ofcom Nations' Committee last month, and met with BT, alongside Chris Holland, Panel Member; Fiona Lennox, Executive Director; and Jenny Borritt, Panel Coordinator. Fiona also met with members of the House of Lords to discuss the consumer rights issues raised by Brexit, and Panel Member Craig Tillotson attended a policy roundtable on digital connectivity with Lord Gardiner, Minister for Rural Affairs.

The Panel was represented at the [Consumer Forum for Communications](#), and presented an update including an introduction to our access services research. We hope next meeting to present the research in full. On behalf of the Panel, Millie Hyde-Smith attended the Ofcom and the Consumer Forum for Communications' workshop, looking at ways that Ofcom's new Comparing Service Quality report could be enhanced in its next iteration to enable consumers to make informed decisions when choosing providers.

Rick Hill, Panel Member for Northern Ireland, met with John French, the CEO of the [Consumer Council](#), this month, regarding their proposed programme of work. Jo Connell, Chris Holland, Fiona Lennox and Jenny Borritt had meetings with DCMS and Vodafone.

Lastly, the Panel was represented at Ofcom's presentation in London of its proposed annual plan.

## Welcome to Lord Terry Burns

Jo Connell and the Panel are looking forward to working with the new Ofcom Chair, Lord Burns, following his appointment from 1 January 2018.

The Panel also thank outgoing Chair, Dame Patricia for her support of the Panel's work during her tenure. "Jo Connell commented: "Patricia has consistently listened to the Panel's concerns, and our evidence of consumer detriment, and has put these issues at the forefront of the Ofcom agenda; and it has also been a great pleasure working with her. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours."

## The Panel and ACOD's consultation responses

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### Response to Ofcom's consultation on clarifying how mobile numbers can be used by Communications Providers

In [our response](#) to this consultation, which proposes to simplify the way communication providers (CPs) can use '07' or 'mobile' numbers, we stated our supported of Ofcom's intention to make it easier for consumers to understand the prices they are likely to pay when using 07 numbers, by removing international call forwarding and conference calling services from the '07' designation.

The Panel believe it would be reasonable to assume that most consumers are not aware of the designations and requirements under Ofcom's National Telephone Numbering Plan (NTNP) and believe that all '07' numbers would be assigned to a mobile phone handset, or similar. Therefore, consumers may believe that calls to all '07' numbers would be priced within their bundled minutes. That use of such services is restricted to mobile-only consumers (excluding those using fixed networks) in order to comply with the current restrictions under the NTNP - is also unjustifiably detrimental to fixed line users. The changes proposed appear logical and helpful to consumers, both in addressing confusion regarding pricing and in removing barriers to services. The Panel agree with the proposed redefinition of 'mobile services' in the NTNP and noted that this will align with the definition used in Ofcom's revised General Conditions (published September 2017).

Our [response is here](#).

## Other news

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### Facilitating mobile connectivity in challenge areas

A joint report by BEREC ([Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications](#)) and the RSPG ([Radio Spectrum Policy Group](#)) has been published which look at the obstacles to providing mobile connectivity in 'challenge areas' and presents some possible solutions.

The report describes four categories of challenge areas: indoor; transportation; non-profitable areas; and other areas such as protected areas, "grey" areas and low quality of service areas. The report presents various solutions such as developing network sharing, installing repeaters, Wi-Fi or imposing coverage obligations, depending on the issue at stake.

The EU's goal for 2020 is to ensure that all Europeans should have access to Internet speeds above 30 Mbit/s and at least 50% or more of European households subscribed to internet access above 100 Mbit/s.

[Read the report here.](#)

## Final week for Ofcom consultations on electronic programme guides and the Annual Plan

Ofcom is proposing to amend the Code of Practice for electronic programme guides ('EPGs') to enable people with visual impairments to make better use of them and has opened a [consultation](#) to get the views of stakeholders on its proposals.

Ofcom previously published an initial consultation in 2015 and has taken into account the responses to that consultation, together with other relevant factors, in developing the proposals.

The consultation closes 5pm, Tuesday 6 February 2018 and is [available on Ofcom's website](#) in PDF format, which is compatible with most screen-readers.

Following the presentations around the nations, Ofcom's consultation on its [Proposed Annual Plan 2018-19](#) is also still open until 9 February 2018.

## Ofcom's consultation on On-demand Programme Services

Ofcom has a consultation open on improving the accessibility of regulated video on-demand programme services to those with hearing and/or visual impairments. In line with the Digital Economy Act 2017, responses to the consultation will help to inform Government drafting of regulations in this area.

Ofcom have also produced a BSL video explaining what is involved in responding to the consultation.

The consultation is open until 3 April; the Ofcom website has [more details, and the BSL video](#).

## Connected Nations 2017

Ofcom's [Connected Nations 2017](#) report looks at the communications systems across the UK and its nations. The report outlines the main developments in coverage and performance of fixed broadband and mobile networks, as well as network security and resilience.

Ofcom have produced a handy guide, [the consumer summary](#), highlighting some of the key findings from the Connected Nations 2017 report, and offering hints and tips for users of broadband and mobile services.

## Change to the collection of post data

Ofcom has [announced](#) it is to stop collecting letters volumes and revenues data on a regular basis from operators which handle fewer than two million letters and large letters a year. The change will apply from financial year 2017-18.

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