

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 13 July 2017 at 10.30

Riverside House, 2A Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HA

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell
Chris Holland
Jaya Chakrabarti
Rhys Evans
Rick Hill
Craig Tillotson
Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Jenny Borritt
Millie Hyde-Smith (until item 7)
Catriona Lawrence
Fiona Lennox
Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed all those present.

2. Declarations of Members' interests

2.1 Jaya Chakrabarti informed the Panel she would be attending the DCMS Digital Economy Advisory Group the following week. Rick Hill recused himself from item 8, reminding Members of his role as director of media consultancy Titanic Gap Ltd. Chris Holland reminded Members of his role as Independent Complaint Reviewer for the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) in anticipation of item 9.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 15 June 2017 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 15 June were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

4. Consumer update

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. An update paper had been provided to give Members an overview of Ofcom's consumer priority work areas, progress, next steps and milestones.

4.2 Ofcom colleagues will be providing a paper on nuisance calls to the Ofcom Board next week. Colleagues will provide the Panel with a table that shows providers' current engagement and capabilities for blocking nuisance calls.

4.3 Members **NOTED** that a statement on Triple Play Switching would be published the next day.

4.4 Members **NOTED** that the proposed auto-compensation refunds appeared low when considering the levels of customer harm. Ofcom colleagues explained these numbers were from the proposed voluntary code and did not include missed appointments.

4.5 Quality of Service in Post was discussed and security in offshore BT call centres. Ofcom colleagues **AGREED** to explore the latter issue.

4.6 Ofcom colleagues gave an update on text message scams. It was **NOTED** that the Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA) is now aware of the non-compliance of 'Pro-Money', have stopped providing them a platform and have begun investigating their actions. It was also **NOTED** that Ofcom advice on not replying to nuisance text with 'STOP' can cause conflict when unwanted messages are received from legitimate businesses and replying with 'STOP' can successfully remove consumers from their marketing list.

5. GC 15.10 Monitoring and Enforcement Programme

5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss the progress of the General Condition 15.10 Monitoring and Enforcement Programme. It was **NOTED** that during engagement, providers had been responsive to input from the Panel and Ofcom.

5.2 There was discussion about improving Providers' awareness.

5.3 The Panel questioned whether providers had considered how their accessibility measures adapted to technology, such as screen readers. They also questioned whether providers used their Priority Services Register or voice analytics to automatically put vulnerable consumers through to the accessibility team.

5.4 It was **NOTED** that mystery shopping could not address all issues vulnerable consumers face, and the Panel **AGREED** to help with further research to improve this issue.

6. Call costs including 118 and 070

6.1 Members were provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting.

6.2 It was **NOTED** that the directory enquires market is decreasing, but access charges are high and consumers have a low awareness of pricing.

6.3 Members recommended that colleagues speak to groups representing disabled people and people with learning difficulties and that providers improve transparency by alerting customers to their pricing at the beginning of the call. However, the Panel also advised Ofcom that where a policy was clearly unfair to all consumers Ofcom should not delay investigation while they look into the groups who are most impacted.

6.4 Members mentioned having seen links to the Ofcom call cost guide on access charges on websites, giving the appearance of legitimacy to their pricing. Ofcom colleagues **AGREED** to explore the issue.

6.5 There was discussion on the accessibility of phone books and hospital phones. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom colleagues could provide an update on hospital phones at a later date.

7. Unfair policies and practice

- 7.1 The Panel was provided with a paper and updates were discussed.
- 7.2 Members discussed the issues affecting consumers with voice only fixed line. It was **NOTED** that the team working on this would ask for the Panel's input and their research would be presented in September.
- 7.3 Members discussed directory enquiries and whether transparency could be achieved with a voice announcement alerting consumers to call pricing at the beginning of the call. It was **AGREED** that this would be researched further.
- 7.4 Overcharging for a handset was discussed and it was **AGREED** that the Panel would write to Mobile Network Operators voicing their concerns.
- 7.5 The Panel also discussed the policy currently requiring customers to wait for 8-weeks to be able to escalate their complaint to an ADR scheme, where a letter has not been provided by their provider to state that 'deadlock' has been reached, as well as the effects of early termination charges on house moves.

8. Mobile coverage programme

- 8.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to give the Panel an update on the mobile coverage programme.
- 8.2 Discussion covered consumer research, policy options, repeaters and Wi-Fi-calling.

9. BBC

- 9.1 Rick Hill left the room due to a potential conflict of interest and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to explain the duties of BBC performance, specifically with its purpose and diversity, to the Panel.
- 9.2 The update covered BBC responsibilities, changes to licensing, performance measures, and the consultation closing 17th July. Members addressed the framework in place to support access services with public service broadcasters. It was **AGREED** that best practice would be further explored by the Panel.
- 9.3 It was **NOTED** that the consultation did not address 'What does best look like?' and it was **AGREED** this would be fed back to the relevant colleagues.

10. Complaints handling

- 10.1 Members were provided with a paper and colleagues joined the meeting. Chris Holland **NOTED** his declared role and offered to leave the room if asked.
- 10.2 Ofcom colleagues **NOTED** three areas of priority: reducing customer service complaints, signposting ADR resolution, and working with the General Conditions review team.
- 10.3 It was **NOTED** that the first report on ADR statistics will be published this year.

11. Mobile Switching

11.1 Members were provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting.

11.2 Colleagues described three principle harms of switching mobile provider: time and difficulty, double paying, and loss of service. There was discussion on the proposed auto-switch process, and the consultation that closed on 30th June.

12. Brexit

12.1 Members were provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting.

12.2 Discussion covered the effect of Brexit on broadcasting, roaming, post, the Digital Economy Act, and the consequences of losing EU talent from the Ofcom workforce.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 5G - Craig Tillotson had attended a 5G forum, where 5G and changes to the mobile landscape were discussed. It was **AGREED** a short description of the event would be written for the Panel's July bulletin. It also was **NOTED** that members of the Advisory Committee for England had inquired whether the Panel could write a pamphlet noting the capabilities of 5G. It was **AGREED** this would be better provided by Ofcom and that Ofcom planned to publish a discussion document on 5G in late July.

13.2 It was **NOTED** this was the final meeting to be attended by Bob Twitchin. The Chairman and Members expressed their thanks to Bob for his engagement and determination over the past 10 years, in pursuing issues affecting the consumers that the Panel and ACOD represents, particularly in promoting and protecting the rights of disabled consumers.

.....ChairDate