

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 15 June 2017 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Chris Holland (Acting-Chair)

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Craig Tillotson

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

Millie Hyde-Smith

Catriona Lawrence

Fiona Lennox

Mairi Macleod

Other Ofcom colleagues

Colleagues from CISAS (item 7)

A colleague from the Broadband Stakeholder Group (item 12)

Apologies

Jo Connell (Chair)

Bob Twitchin

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 Chris Holland, acting as Chairman in Jo Connell's absence, welcomed all those present.

2. Declarations of Members' interests

2.1 In anticipation of items 6 and 7, Chris Holland reminded Members of his role as Independent Complaint Reviewer for the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR). It was **AGREED** he would chair the discussion, but would not engage in it.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 18 May 2017 and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 18 May 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 engaging with providers on more complaint

handling issues in the next 6-12 months and would like to discuss their strategy with the Panel. At the July meeting the team will share the metrics CPs use to measure their own complaints. In the July meeting Ofcom colleagues will also update the Panel on GC15/Ofcom's Vulnerability policy and research that is due to take place in the summer.

4.3 Mobile coverage: Members asked for an update on providers' progress towards mobile coverage obligations. An update will be provided by Ofcom colleagues in the July meeting.

4.4 Members urged Ofcom colleagues to act promptly on Retail Voice Only/Standalone Landline consumer protection measures, highlighting the cost to vulnerable consumers and unjustified enrichment to providers. It was **NOTED** that landline-only research has been commissioned, which will help to provide evidence and inform discussions.

4.5 Ofcom colleagues agreed to find out whether the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are promoting the improved BT Basic social tariff and also to provide details of KCOM's social tariff at the next meeting.

4.6 The cost of calling 118 numbers and impact on consumers is being assessed by Ofcom. Members asked Ofcom colleagues whether access fees and out of bundle charges were to be included in this investigation. It was **AGREED** that the team would return to the Panel at a later date to update Members on the progress of the project.

5. Adult Media Lives & Media Use research reports

5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss the findings of Ofcom's Adult Media Lives & Media Use research reports. Members also watched video clips compiled from the project.

5.2 Members **NOTED** that one of the key findings of the report was that there had been an increase in usage of social media by over 65s.

5.3 The report will be presented at a stakeholder event in Riverside House in September and the event may be replicated in the Nations if desired. Ofcom colleagues asked Members for advice on sharing the research externally.

6. Political update

6.1 It was **NOTED** that since the last update, the Digital Economy Bill had been passed. An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and updated Members on items of relevance within the Digital Economy Act. The colleague then explained which items would require secondary legislation.

6.2 The Government proposal to require Mobile Network Operators (MNO) to apply caps, to prevent 'bill shock' requires another commencement order and work should start in July, post-dated to April next year. Ofcom colleagues will feed back to the Panel on whether this also applies to Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNO).

6.3 Members were informed that Brexit would be the main focus of the department for the foreseeable future.

7. CISAS

7.1 Colleagues from CISAS joined the meeting to provide a verbal update. Chris Holland **NOTED** his declared role and explained to colleagues that he would chair the discussion but would not contribute.

7.2 The CISAS colleagues gave an update on complaints volumes and metrics; they explained that there had been an increase in complaints, which had led to an increase in resource. It is believed this increase is a result of a greater consumer awareness and Ofcom's work in encouraging CPs to send deadlock letters in good time. CISAS updated the Panel on its review of internal key performance indicators.

7.3 Panel Members asked for an update on the publication of complaints data. CISAS colleagues advised that they have aligned their measures with Ofcom recommendations and publication from both ADR schemes is awaited.

7.4 Members voiced that the 8-week period for escalating a complaint to ADR is cause for concern.

8. ADR review

8.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. Chris Holland **NOTED** his declared role and had not seen Appendix B. He noted he would make observations and then remove himself from the discussion, and also the room if asked.

8.2 Ofcom's review of the two accredited ADR schemes has resulted in 25 responses in comparison to 4 in 2012.

8.3 Decisions about the consultation will be announced in the autumn. It was **AGREED** that colleagues would come back to the Panel in September.

9. Nuisance calls

9.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting. There are currently three primary work streams on nuisance calls: call blocking, enhancing the meaningfulness of CLI, and persistent misuse.

9.2 Members **NOTED** that Sky TalkShield is a new service allowing customers to opt in at no additional cost, to block nuisance calls. Members asked questions about the service's functionality, particularly regarding the issue of blocking the right types of calls where the customer is in vulnerable circumstances.

10. Net Neutrality (also known as 'Open Internet')

10.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. Ofcom colleagues advised that net neutrality regulations came into force in April 2017 including an obligation that Ofcom produce a report each year on progress. The Ofcom colleagues advised that monitoring had revealed no serious concerns and no minor concerns that could not be addressed.

10.2 Ofcom colleagues advised that only one mobile ISP provides speed information in their contract. Members have **NOTED** that it is unclear whether speeds information is powerful enough to affect choice, however

there is not enough immediate value to make this a current priority.

11. Consumer Engagement Project

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

11.2 Ofcom colleagues asked Members for their input into the definition of ‘consumers in vulnerable situations’, the scope of the project and the research to be conducted in the summer.

11.3 Members were advised that Ofcom intended to look at remedies to improve consumer engagement, including the use of price comparison websites where relevant. Members advised that CPs had previously expressed concerns about the use of ‘midata’; Ofcom colleagues would look into this.

11.4 Ofcom colleagues will update on the progress of the project at a later meeting.

12. Implications of Brexit on the Digital Communications Sector

12.1 Members had been provided with a report published by the Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG) and a BSG colleague joined the meeting.

12.2 Members asked the BSG colleague about the risks and opportunities of Brexit and asked whether the BSG executive members had offered to provide advice to Government; the BSG colleague confirmed that BSG had offered to advise.

12.3 Members were advised that another BSG Brexit forum would take place after the summer, following on from the first forum that took place on 13th June.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

.....ChairDate