

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 17 June 2015 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Chris Holland

Mairi Macleod

Craig Tillotson (Items 1 - 9)

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

External visitors from Citizens Advice (item 4)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Declarations of interest

1.1 Members **NOTED** that Jaya Chakrabarti had stepped down from her role as board member at the Centre for Citizenship, Enterprise and Governance at the Northampton Business School, University of Northampton.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 20 May 2015 and matters arising

2.1 Subject to minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 20 May were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

2.2 As a follow-up to the ADR update at the last meeting, Members **NOTED** the intention to include an ADR comment piece in a future issue of the Panel's monthly bulletin.

3. O2 outage update

3.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to brief Members on the recent bank holiday weekend O2 network outage when some customers had been without service for several hours; on O2's response to the outage; on O2's efforts to restore service and on Ofcom's dialogue with the mobile provider following this network failure. Members highlighted the importance of having the necessary technical personnel available to respond to an outage, measures to communicate problems of this kind to consumers via media of different kinds and queried whether there should

be automatic rebates in these situations.

4. Citizens Advice - Calling the Shots report

4.1 Colleagues from Citizens Advice (CA) joined the meeting to talk to the Panel about CA's recent analysis of the mobile market, published recently in its *Calling the shots?* report and based on the issues reported to CA's consumer service, including calls to CA's consumer helpline. Members **NOTED** that CA intended to take forward work in three areas: mobile phones as credit products; misleading practices at the point of sale; and standards of service and contract exit terms. The slides presented would be copied to Members.

4.2 Issues raised in discussion included the role of CA in campaigning and policy development; consumer vulnerability as a variable; standards of service and contract exit; CA's contact with communications providers in relation to individual consumers' issues, handset purchase and charges out of contract. It was **AGREED** to maintain a dialogue with CA outside the meeting and to discuss how CA and the Panel/ACOD could further work together.

5. 2.3/3.4 GHz update

5.1 Members had received a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to update the Panel on progress with plans to release the 2.3 and 3.4 MHz spectrum bands from MoD to civil/commercial use, a large block of which could be used to provide mobile capacity. Issues discussed included potential interference with Wi-Fi and with assistive listening devices and standards work. The Panel **NOTED** the extensive testing already undertaken by Ofcom and recognised its importance.

6. Mobile coverage update

6.1 Members had received a paper to update them on Ofcom's work on its interactive mobile coverage map. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion and to demonstrate the current version of the coverage checker, scheduled for a soft Summer launch. Members **NOTED** that this work was partly related to the MNOs recent commitment to DCMS to provide Ofcom with data for publication and that the initiative would begin with data solely on outdoor voice coverage.

6.2 Issues highlighted by Members included the desirability of an App to measure the signal strength for all MNOs in an area and of coverage data for journeys/routes; regular update of data; a Welsh language version and accessible versions of the checker, eg for people with visual impairments.

7. Nuisance calls update

7.1 Members had received a paper on Ofcom's recent work to tackle nuisance calls and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members recognised the work done by Ofcom but remained concerned that

there had been limited tangible improvements for consumers. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was focusing on work areas related to CLI, to call blocking, and to use of existing data to further understand the problem of nuisance calls.

7.2 Members highlighted in discussion issues including the Telephone Preference Service (TPS), measures to increase awareness, TPS efficacy and look-alike TPS sites; the Panel's call for free CLI and levels of trust in the numbers presented; network level call blocking and related legal guidance, which would be shared with the Panel.

8. Disabled consumers mystery shopping research

8.1 Ofcom had undertaken mystery shopping designed to test communications providers' compliance with the obligations of General Condition 15.10 to publicise the availability of services for disabled consumers. Members had received a paper on the methodology and findings and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion.

8.2 Members **NOTED** that the results were generally disappointing, with little or no improvement since previous waves of data and that Ofcom was considering options including a monitoring and enforcement programme. Issues raised by Members in discussion included compliance incentives, eg fines; 'visibility' of a customer's disability, communications provider teams or champions with a focus on disability; and the possibility of the Panel/ACOD working closely with the Business Disability Forum to promote best practice to communications providers.

9. Digital Single Market update

9.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and delivered a slide presentation to update members on EU plans for a Digital Single Market (DSM), including reviews of the Audio-visual Media and the Electronic Framework Directives. Members asked and Ofcom colleagues confirmed that there was joined-up thinking on the DSM and Ofcom's own review of UK Digital Communications. The slides presented would be copied to Members.

10. Switching - next steps

10.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to update Members on the next steps in Ofcom's work on switching, including plans to commission research on consumers' understanding of contract end-dates. Members **NOTED** that price changes were the prime motivator for consumer switching, that a new fixed line switching regime was about to come into effect for those consumers whose providers used the copper Openreach network and that the focus of Ofcom's work was now on mobile switching, an element being number portability.

11. PSB update for ACOD

11.1 Members had received a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion, the focus being the findings of diversity research undertaken by Ofcom, as part of the third PSB review, on audience perceptions of representation and portrayal of diverse groups including older people and people with a disability.

11.2 Members **NOTED** that overall PSB viewers felt that the amount of representation of most gender/age combinations was “about right” and portrayal “neutral” but the former less so in relation to women aged 55+ and women over 55 themselves felt that they were portrayed “very negatively” or “fairly negatively” compared to men of that age. The research showed mixed opinions about the amount of representation of disabled people, with 42% of PSB viewers describing it as “about right” and 48% saying there were too few people with disabilities on TV. The representative research sample included people with disabilities, 51% of whom felt that there were too few disabled people on TV. For Members the employment of disabled people by broadcasters was also a concern. Ofcom would be publishing the research shortly, alongside its PSB review statement.

12. CR update for ACOD

12.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion and Members had received a paper summarising progress made under Ofcom’s Corporate Responsibility programme during 2014/15 and its priorities for 2015/16, the latter including continued development and implementation of the Disability Action Plan. Members were now encouraged with overall progress and welcomed future plans.

13. Any other business

13.1 Members **NOTED** that Ofcom had just announced a review of the regulation of Royal Mail; that BT had been criticized in the media for overcharging for home phones; that a Member would attend a digital inclusion event organized by the Alliance for Digital Accessibility and also a Rica research roundtable.

13.2 Rick Hill and Jaya Chakrabarti gave their apologies for the July meeting.

.....ChairDate