

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 19 October 2017 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Amanda Britain

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Rick Hill

Chris Holland

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Adam Gayton

Fiona Lennox

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Craig Tillotson

1. Declarations of Members' interests

1.1 Jaya Chakrabarti declared her membership of the DCMS Tech Counter Terrorism Panel.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 21 September 2017 and matters arising

2.1 Subject to minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 21 September were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair. The Panel would return to discussion of Ofcom's Review of Call Costs project at a future meeting.

2.2 The Panel's access services research had been published on the day of the meeting and would be promoted in the Nations, at events involving the Ofcom Advisory Committees, and with a possible roundtable event at Riverside House.

3. Consumer update

3.1 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.

3.2 There was discussion of issues including the risk of security breaches in call centres, raised previously by the Panel, and which Ofcom would discuss with the relevant communications provider (CP) shortly and then report back to the Panel; nuisance calls research; complaints handling, which would be an agenda item in the New Year; the Panel's regular catch-

ups with individual CPs and it was **AGREED** that Plusnet and the Post Office should be included in the Panel's regular rounds of meetings; Quality of Service (QoS) and it was **NOTED** that the Panel would be represented at a forthcoming workshop to be hosted by the Consumer Forum for Communications; vulnerability, Ofcom would confirm whether a Panel Member was able to attend a related event to be hosted by the UK Regulators Network; Ofcom's Future of Voice project, which would return as an agenda item early in 2018; and mobile coverage, which would come to the Panel in January 2018.

4. Mobile roaming

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members had received a paper that summarised the new EU 'Roam like at home' (RLAH) regulations, that came into effect in June 2017, and Ofcom's approach to addressing any compliance concerns and next steps. To protect against potentially abusive or excessive use of roaming, eg permanent roaming, mobile providers could adopt a Fair Use Policy (FUP). The Panel asked Ofcom to revisit the information provided on RLAH and FUP on the Ofcom website and consider improving the information available to consumers. A Panel Member highlighted some recent negative roaming experiences and would forward to Ofcom screenshots of the roaming messages that had been received.

5. Political update

5.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to update members on recent political and legislative developments.

6. Connected Nations

6.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had been provided with a paper to provide an initial view of the key themes in Ofcom's next Connected Nations report on fixed and mobile services, due for publication in November. In summary it was **NOTED** that broadband coverage and speeds had improved but less so in rural areas. Coverage of both mobile voice and data services had continued to increase, driven by 4G but, again, improvements were required, in rural areas, on road and rail.

6.2 There was discussion of issues including consumers still experiencing broadband speeds of less than 2 Mbit/s and it was confirmed that relevant data would be included in the report; consumer experience of unsuccessful mobile calls (drop out in the middle of a conversation); rurality and availability of granular data; and outputs, including data visualisations, Ofcom's mobile app, interactive coverage maps, and open access to Ofcom's data for policy makers and for CPs. The Connected Nations team would return to the Panel in December.

7. Access Services

7.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to brief Members on Ofcom's planned consultation on improving accessibility of regulated video on-

demand programme services (ODPS) for people with hearing and/or visual impairments. The consultation would inform government drafting of regulations in this area in line with new requirements under the Digital Economy Act 2017. The timetable to bring in new regulations was likely to run until mid-2019.

7.2 Issues discussed included the need to ensure consumer awareness of access services on ODPS; speaking EPGs; current technical barriers to provision of access services on ODPS on different platforms. A Member argued that pay-TV customers should be entitled to a discount if they were not able to receive accessible services.

8. Post

8.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to brief Members on Post issues. Topics discussed included quality of service; 1st class mail post-code performance; national, local and special delivery targets; absolute numbers behind percentage figures; and enforcement of targets and financial penalties.

9. Ofcom Annual Plan 2018/19

9.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Members had been provided with a paper seeking views on the areas of Ofcom's work to be highlighted as priorities for 2018/19. Details of goals and highlights for the current year had been provided for information.

9.2 Members made a number of comments and suggested that project descriptions should be focused on consumer outcomes; argued that there should be a greater emphasis on post and that microbusinesses should be considered as vulnerable consumers due to their reliance on broadband services; highlighted the importance of good customer service and a need to explain what 'helping consumers engage' meant in terms of their interaction with providers; confirmed the importance of completion of work on BT/Openreach separation and on a broadband USO, the latter not being entirely in Ofcom's gift; and suggested increased prominence for work to improve indoor mobile coverage. The Panel would submit a response to Ofcom's consultation on the draft Plan and the Ofcom team would return to the Panel in January.

10. Broadband speeds code

10.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Ofcom would be consulting on changes to improve the broadband speeds code, including information on speed at the point of sale; measures to strengthen the right to exit if speeds fall; and to increase the number of customers who benefit from the code by expanding its scope. Ofcom had published a consultation earlier in the month and would welcome a Panel response.

10.2 Members made a number of comments and proposed proportional billing, customers could pay for the service that they received but this could also be made available as a service offering, since a poor service in

some locations was better than no service at all; and meaningful information about what could be done at different speeds.

11. Automatic compensation

11.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief Members on Ofcom’s decision to introduce an automatic compensation scheme that had been proposed by fixed CPs. CPs had committed to implement the scheme by early 2019.

12. Any other business

12.1 The Fair Telecoms Campaign was seeking a ban on cold calling by claims management companies, and their agents, and this would be reported in the next edition of the Panel bulletin.

12.2 The Panel would be represented at the upcoming UK Council on Deafness annual conference in November.

12.3 Ofcom colleagues would be invited to a future Panel meeting to discuss mobile bill limits.

12.4 The Panel wished to feed into the design of Ofcom’s planned customer satisfaction tracker.

12.5 The CMA would be invited to meet the Panel to discuss the CMA’s work on parcel surcharging.

12.6 The Panel’s regular monthly update paper on stakeholder engagement would be replaced by a format based on the Panel’s list of “unfair policies and practices”.

.....ChairDate