

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 21 May 2014 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Kim Brook

Jaya Chakrabarti

Chris Holland

Mairi Macleod

Craig Tillotson (items 1 to 7)

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Eleanor Berg

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

External visitor from Jigsaw (item 4)

External visitors from PhonepayPlus (item 6)

Other Ofcom colleagues

1. Minutes of the meeting on 30 April 2014 and matters arising

1.1 The minutes were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chairman.

1.2. The Panel would write shortly to BT about the delayed launch of the Next Generation Text Relay service (NGTR).

1.3 The Panel would submit shortly its response to the BIS consultation on *Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumers* .

2. Non-geographic calls update

2.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to brief members on preparations for the June 2015 implementation of changes designed to tackle consumer confusion about the costs of making calls to non-geographic numbers. Members **NOTED** that with implementation more than a year away, the present focus was on providing communications providers and service providers with information about the changes, to be followed by a focus on consumers. Service providers were the companies, public bodies and other organisations that make use of non-geographic numbers. The Panel would be updated on the programme of work and the 'UK Calling' website at the end of the year.

2.2 Members reiterated their concern about the use of higher rate numbers to call government services. The Panel discussed the fact that the NAO had published a report, *Charges for customer telephone lines*, in July 2013, and subsequently, in December 2013, the Cabinet Office published guidelines on the use of customer service numbers for government departments and public bodies. A link to the guidelines would be circulated.

3. Receiver sensitivity

3.1. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion of mobile handset performance issues including the potential degradation of service resulting from a variety of issues. Members **NOTED** that academic and industry research had been undertaken into antenna design and how it can impact mobile performance and Members would be provided with links to the research. Members stated that it was important for consumers to understand the impact choice of device had on mobile experience. The Panel expressed its continuing interest in this area and relevant developments.

4. Micro-business research

4.1 Members had been provided with the latest draft of Jigsaw's report on the Panel's research project on how micro-businesses engage with communications services. Colleagues from Ofcom and Jigsaw joined the meeting for discussion of the report and the Panel's own proposed conclusions and recommendations. Members provided detailed comments and a number of actions were agreed that would result in a final proofed Jigsaw report for discussion at the next Panel meeting. It was **AGREED** that a communications plan would be required for July publication of this research.

5. Infrastructure report

5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss plans for Ofcom's Infrastructure Report 2014, in particular the citizen and consumer dimensions and those affecting microbusinesses. Members made a number of comments and suggested coverage of telecare/health issues; network reliability, dependability and contingency planning; internet addressing; Wi-Fi security; and a need to express supply-side matters in consumer terms. Ofcom's report was expected to be published in October 2014.

6. PhonepayPlus

6.1 Colleagues from PhonepayPlus (PPP) joined the meeting to discuss its recent research report on consumer journeys in the premium rate services and micropayment markets, entitled *Understanding Consumer Journeys*, and its Strategic Plan 2014-17, currently out to consultation. Members **NOTED** that there were both positive and negative research findings relating to the PRS industry and to PPP but expressed concern about the number of sub-optimal customer enquiry and complaint experiences. In response to a request from the Panel, PPP would provide more details of survey findings related to consumers with a disability.

6.2 Members made a number of comments on PPP's draft Strategic Plan 2014-17 and the Panel **AGREED** to submit a written response to the consultation.

7. Media literacy

7.2 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to discuss the findings in Ofcom's *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report 2014*. Members made a number of comments and suggested a range of topics for inclusion in next year's media literacy surveys, these included exploring issues for people with a range of disabilities, including learning disabilities, or for consumers aged 75+ or asking those who chose to remain 'offline' about the benefits as such, each as possible 'deep-dives'; security and consent issues; a closer look at use of online government services; and usability, or its lack, as a barrier to online activity. Ofcom would be hosting a launch event for the report the next day and Members would be provided with the slides used at the event.

8. Nuisance calls

8.1 Members had been provided with a paper and grid to outline the Panel's positions on the recommendations to tackle nuisance calls made by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Nuisance Calls. Members noted that the first meeting of the consent taskforce would take place shortly. Fiona Lennox would represent the Panel. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom was undertaking work on the role communications providers currently played in giving information and advice to consumers in relation to nuisance calls and messages, and was seeking Panel input and feedback on its proposed approach. Details would be copied to Members to allow comment.

8.2 Ofcom had published a consumer guide on dealing with nuisance calls and messages on which the Panel had advised. The guide was available from Ofcom's website, raising the issue of its promulgation to consumers who were not online - this matter would be raised with Ofcom. In discussion it was confirmed that tightening of the rules around consent; free CLI services; steps to make it easier for consumers to raise their complaints about nuisance calls and messages; and improving the effectiveness of the Telephone Preference Service were key issues.

9. Any other business

9.1 It was **AGREED** that AbilityNet would be invited to meet the Panel.

9.2 Statistical data contained in the Panel's *Bridging the Gap: Sustaining online engagement* research report would be updated and provided to Members.

9.3 Jaya Chakrabarti would attend the 12 June meeting of Ofcom's Advisory Committee for England (in Chris Holland's absence).

9.4 Members **NOTED** that BBC News has created the role of disability correspondent and had appointed the broadcaster Nikki Fox to the post.

.....ChairmanDate