

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 29 April at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Jo Connell (Chair)

Jaya Chakrabarti

Rhys Evans

Mairi Macleod

Craig Tillotson

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

Jenny Borritt

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

External visitor from research agency (item 5)

Other Ofcom colleagues

Apologies

Rick Hill

Chris Holland

1. Minutes of the meeting on 19 March 2015 and matters arising

1.1 Subject to minor amendment, the minutes were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

1.2 The Panel had received a response to its letter to the BBC Trust concerning the accessibility of online AV content and the publication of relevant metrics. In addition, the Trust had passed the Panel's letter to the BBC Director General's Office and a response from the BBC was awaited.

1.3 Members **NOTED** that the Panel had submitted a response to Ofcom's open letter to stakeholders as part of the review of regulation concerning complaint handling and dispute resolution in the postal market.

2. Ofcom consumer update

2.1 Having provided a paper, an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting. Issues discussed included Ofcom's Digital Communications Review (DCR) (an agenda item later in the meeting); EU plans for a digital single market in Europe; gaining provider led switching - for which an explanatory guide was requested for use by Panel Members; the mobile Porting Authorisation Code (PAC) system; mobile handset unlocking, when it was suggested that unlocking could be an issue pursued as part of the Panel's work on treating consumers fairly; the code of practice on broadband speeds (the Panel requested sight of the latest version/draft); and the Telephone Preference Service and its effectiveness.

3. Mobile complaints

3.1 Members had received a paper providing a summary of the findings of a recent Citizens Advice (CA) report entitled *Calling the shots?* and an update on Ofcom's engagement with CA and plans going forward. The report contained analysis of problems in the mobile phone market, based on 500 cases dealt with by CA's consumer helpline, and explored opportunities for stronger consumer protection.

3.2 There was discussion of issues including the positive value of a common approach being adopted by CA and Ofcom's contact centre; the coding of issues, problems and complaints and the robustness of data; and the CA's *Consumer Codes* consultation, to which the Panel would submit a response.

4. Access Services update

4.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief members on recent developments in Access Services policy and activity related to the quality of live subtitling; signing arrangements for low-audience and for non-domestic channels; and the accessibility features of electronic programme guides.

4.2 Members **NOTED** that in May Ofcom would publish its third round of measurements on quality of live subtitling. When Ofcom's measurements were available the Panel would give consideration to a possible research project on live subtitling.

4.3 Related issues discussed with Ofcom colleagues included broadcast delay of live material being a possible means of improvement to the accuracy of live subtitling; the need for compromise, with different viewers preferring different subtitling speeds; viewers being given sufficient time to read subtitles and watch images; whether there could be a solution at the viewer end, ie via control of the set-top box; and provision of advance scripts to subtitlers. Ofcom would attend the forthcoming general assembly of the European Union of the Deaf to discuss signing arrangements for non-domestic channels and provide the Panel with feedback.

5. Panel/ACOD research

5.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting with a colleague from the agency undertaking the Panel's inclusive communications qualitative research, into the experiences of older and disabled consumers when contacting communications providers. Members were given a presentation of findings, including a number of video clips. Members made a number of comments and it was **AGREED** that the structure of the research report and timescales for publication should be pursued outside the meeting.

6. PAYG mobile

6.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to brief members on the early stages of an Ofcom review of pay as you go (PAYG) mobile services. Areas discussed included issues of disconnection; what was required to keep a service active and useable, i.e. use it or lose it; recycling of numbers; information at the point of sale; handset specifications and PAYG customer

registration. The Ofcom team would keep the Panel informed as the project developed.

7. Strategic Review of Digital Communications (DCR)

7.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting, Members having been provided with a paper on the scope and planned approach to Ofcom’s DCR. It was noted that the DCR terms of reference had been published in March. Members **NOTED** Ofcom’s plans for stakeholder and roundtable events, which would take place in May. The Panel discussed recommendations arising from the Panel-led review of Ofcom consultation processes that it hoped the team would adopt.

7.2 There was discussion of scope, with the Panel advocating a big picture approach as opposed to what appeared to be a narrow competitive markets focus. Of concern to the Panel/ACOD were the consumers and citizens not served by the market and the public policy interventions - as opposed to market developments - that could be required as remedies. The Panel intended to take a keen and ongoing interest in the DCR. Following the discussion with the team, the Panel’s comments on the scope and Terms of Reference would be formally submitted.

8. PSB update

8.1 Members had been provided with a paper, to update them on the PSB Review and summarising key consumer issues raised by the earlier consultation. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. Diversity research was being undertaken as a part of the review and Members **NOTED** that this would be shared with the Panel/ACOD, following its completion.

8.2 Issues raised in discussion included definition of PSB, whether this should be the delivery and distribution of content in numerous ways and via multiple platforms and devices; the popularity of Youtube, amongst young people in particular; and issues of accessibility and portrayal relating to older and disabled people.

9. Any other business

9.1 A Member reported on a recent event to discuss the future of the 999 service, with attendees including Ofcom, Government departments and the Institution of Engineering and Technology.

9.2 Members discussed the feedback to be provided following responses to the Panel’s consultation on its workplan. The website would be updated accordingly.

.....ChairmanDate