

7 March 2016

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Chairman

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Dear Jo

Ofcom Draft Annual Plan 2016/17 – response from Communications Consumer Panel (the Panel) and the Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People (ACOD)

Thank you for your constructive and detailed response to Ofcom's proposed Annual Plan.

The Board very much values the independent and expert input from both the Consumer Panel and ACOD and looks forward to working with you during the coming year. Your ability to hold Ofcom to account in these areas is important.

You draw out a number of themes, involving key areas of work, as well as pushing us to do more in some areas.

The Annual Plan team will ensure we take account of all your comments, with those of other stakeholders, in finalising the Plan – scheduled for publication at the end of March. As ever, Ofcom colleagues are available to brief the Panel and ACOD at any time, across any aspect of our work.

This is an important moment for Ofcom and the sector. Publication of conclusions from the Strategic Review of Digital Communications last month set our strategic agenda, and there is much to do this year to deliver on it. As you know, we have set demanding targets for ourselves and industry to improve consumer experiences. There needs to be a step change in quality, and Ofcom will work in a number of areas to make this happen, including:

- Setting tougher targets for Openreach to reflect consumer expectations.
- Delivering greater transparency on quality with publication of more comparative information on industry performance.
- Introducing automatic compensation and other forms of redress for loss or degradation of service.

This runs alongside our continuing work, reflected in the proposed Annual Plan, to improve customer service and complaints handling, which will pick up some of your ideas on publication of ADR data and the timing and efficiency of ADR referrals.

We will continue to do work on the coverage and quality of networks, helping other stakeholders where appropriate. The broadband USO is a significant commitment by

Government to achieve real ubiquitous broadband penetration, and Ofcom will support them through consultation and implementation. We will publish more detail on the availability of broadband services, and improve the information available in our mobile coverage maps. We note also your points about mobile signal thresholds, and work is continuing on agreeing a realistic threshold.

I share your concern on rising line rental prices, and Ofcom is working on this. The team has set up a programme to obtain more granular pricing data from industry, and will be using this to assess whether particular customers or customer segments are exposed particularly to price rises. They will look at whether the market is delivering well for everyone, and whether additional protection is needed for some consumers. This is part of our ongoing priority to consider the needs of older, disabled and vulnerable customers. We note your particular recommendations in that respect.

Like the Panel, I am frustrated by the plague of nuisance calls, and the effect this has on people. We are continuing to work with others to tackle the problem, including our enforcement work and review of persistent misuse policy. As you may know, providers are working to identify and stop nuisance calls on their networks, and have recently signed a MoU with us to progress this. We are also working with international partners on better detection and enforcement.

On switching, I am pleased to say that our proposals for improvements to mobile switching are well advanced, and publication of a consultation on these is scheduled before Easter.

As you know, Ofcom is strengthening its ability to focus on better outcomes for all users of communications services – consumers and businesses, wherever they are. The consumer strategy project will ensure the whole organisation is aligned behind this. Lindsey Fussell joins Ofcom in April as the new Director of Consumer Group, and she will lead this work. I hope this will lead to even stronger links between Ofcom and the Panel and ACOD going forward.

With thanks,
Kind regards
Patricia

Dame Patricia Hodgson

