

Minutes of the 91st meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel
on 26 September 2012 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel

Jo Connell (Chairman)

Kim Brook

Chris Holland

Mairi Macleod

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

Jonathan Pillinger-Cork

Other Ofcom colleagues (items 5 - 11 and 13)

Apologies

Libby Kinney

1. Introduction and welcome

1.1 In her new role as Panel Chairman, Jo Connell welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2 The Chairman reported briefly on the Panel's well attended seminar *Sustaining online engagement: progressing the digital journey*, held the previous week at Ofcom. A summary of next steps would be drawn up and circulated to members and speakers and attendees would be contacted to thank them for taking part in the event. It was **AGREED** that the Panel would revisit digital participation at the end of the year. Members **NOTED** that Marketa Mach, CEO of Go ON UK, would attend the Panel later in the year.

2. Declarations of interest

2. Anticipating the text relay update agenda item, Bob Twitchin declared his membership of the Telecommunications Relay Campaign.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 25 July 2012, matters arising and progress on actions

3.1 Members **APPROVED** the draft minutes for signature by the Chairman.

3.2 Members **NOTED** that the Panel would be kept informed of developments in Ofcom's work on General Condition 9, the Condition related to contract terms for telecoms services, and that Ofcom's mobile coverage team would provide an update at the next Panel meeting.

4. Developments of interest to the Panel

4.1 Members had been provided with an information paper capturing recent news stories relating to developments in communications. Members **NOTED**

that the recent report of the House of Lords Communications Committee had been critical of the Government's broadband strategy, arguing that it risked leaving some communities behind. It was **AGREED** that the report would be forwarded to members.

5. CMR update and research roundup

5.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. There was discussion of Ofcom's research activities and of findings from its recently published Communications Market Report (CMR). Discussion included the impact of the recession on consumers' communications spend; the take-up and use of tablets; the purchase of devices like smartphones, that internet access alone was not a driver for some consumers; mobile coverage and levels of consumer satisfaction; and data on nuisance calls.

5.2 The Panel confirmed its interest in contributing to Ofcom's planning of its next CMR and it was **NOTED** that it would make sense to discuss this further at the December Panel meeting. In addition Ofcom expected to publish its Consumer Experience report in January and the Panel wished to be involved in the launch event.

6. Political update

6.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and provided an oral update on various relevant Government and legislative issues. It was reported that in the recent Cabinet reshuffle Maria Miller MP had been appointed as Secretary of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Members **NOTED** that the scope and timetable of a Communications Bill remained unclear.

7. Consumer guide - nuisance calls

7.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion and members **NOTED** that the *Nuisance calls and messages* guide aimed to explain the different types of nuisance calls and messages that consumers might receive and why; the legislation covering them; and the action that could be taken - giving details of the appropriate regulator.

7.2 Members welcomed the initiative and **AGREED** to flag the guide on the Panel website. Being a web-based document, members **NOTED** that the guide could be updated or improved, as required, in the light of feedback. In discussion members made a number of comments, these included confirming the importance of plain English; raising issues related to scams; and querying whether consumers were always aware that they were receiving marketing calls. [Note: In further discussion subsequent to the meeting, the Panel was apprised of changes that had been made to the guide as a result of its feedback and it was agreed that the Panel would endorse the guide.]

8. DTT coexistence

8.1 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and provided an oral update on plans to tackle potential TV interference that could arise from the planned release of 800 MHz spectrum for 4G mobile services. Members **NOTED** that Andrew Pinder had recently begun to work in a part-time role helping mobile network operators prepare to run the new Mitco organisation that would

deliver assistance to households. An Oversight Board would be established to monitor and assess the performance of Mitco. The Board would include a consumer representative.

9. Text relay update

9.1 Members had been provided with a paper to update them on Ofcom's review of relay services. An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting for discussion. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom would publish a statement shortly and that all communications providers would be required to provide access to an improved Next Generation Text Relay (NGTR) with an 18 month implementation period. A member stressed the need to conduct user trials of the NGTR.

9.2 Members **NOTED** that Ofcom intended to work with the Government and disability groups to encourage provision of video relay services on a voluntary basis by communications providers, organisations and businesses. Ofcom would also examine the case for requiring communication providers to provide video relay services in the future.

10. Ofcom's Annual Plan

10.1 Members discussed briefly what they considered to be the priorities for Ofcom and the Panel in 2013/14. They were then joined by an Ofcom colleague and discussed the process that would lead to publication of Ofcom's draft Annual Plan 2013/14. Members were invited and **AGREED** to give consideration to what Ofcom's priorities should be and their views would be forwarded to Ofcom's Annual Plan team.

11. The Consumer Interest Toolkit

11.1 Members had been provided with a paper to inform them about work Ofcom was undertaking to review its processes to ensure that they remained aligned with the Consumer Interest Toolkit (the mechanism devised by the Panel in 2006 to assess Ofcom's systems and processes to ensure that consumer interests remained at the heart of the regulator's work). Ofcom's intranet pages referring to the toolkit would be revised and consideration was being given to how best to reinforce awareness of the toolkit in Ofcom.

12. Any other business

12.1 A number of members were experiencing difficulties receiving attachments to emails sent to them from Ofcom and it was **AGREED** that this matter should be raised with Ofcom.

11.2 Having attended the event, Mairi Macleod reported on the RNIB's *Technology for life: tools for inclusion* conference held earlier in September at the Glasgow Science Centre.

11.3 The Panel's media advisor Siân Evans would be moving on to a new role. Steps would be taken to contract a replacement.

ACOD item: Postal users' needs

1. Members had been provided with a paper and an Ofcom colleague joined the meeting to update on Ofcom's review of postal users' needs and to provide details of the findings of related consumer research. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom would publish a consultation shortly, inviting views on the review and the research undertaken.