

## Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 12 December 2024 at 10.30 am

Meeting held in hybrid format at Riverside House and via Microsoft Teams

### Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Helen Froud (Chair)

Rachel Burr

Judith Clifton

Lenna Cumberbatch

Michelle Goddard

Robert Hammond

Michael Wardlow

### Apologies

None

### In attendance

The Panel's Executive Team

Representatives from Dissonance Consulting (item 7)

Representatives of the Phone-Paid Services Authority (PSA) and the PSA's Consumer Panel (item 8)

Item
<b>1. Welcome and introduction</b>  1.1 The Chair welcomed Panel Members and attendees to the meeting.
<b>2. Declarations of Members' interests</b>  2.1 There were no declarations of interest.
<b>3. Minutes of the meeting on 14 November 2024 and matters arising</b>  3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 14 November 2024 were <b>APPROVED</b> as a true and accurate reflection.



3.2 The Panel had received a precis from Ofcom on how the postal quality of service is monitored. Members raised further questions to better understand the specifics of how postal quality of service is recorded and any research methodologies which are taken into consideration. The Panel agreed to re-group and further discuss postal monitoring before further discussion with Ofcom.

#### 4. Chair's update

4.1 The Chair and Members provided an overview of the Panel's recent activity and stakeholder engagement across the UK since the last meeting held on 14 November.

4.2 The Chair provided an update on recruitment, which was ongoing.

#### 5. Consumer Policy update

5.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom's consumer policy team on its key consumer priority areas.

5.2 Members advised that they would look forward to learning how the new in-contract price rules which come into force in 2025 will be monitored.

5.3 Members also advised that they would keenly await publication of Ofcom's pricing trends report encapsulating availability data, take up and awareness of social tariffs within the marketplace, and were eager to view any new Ofcom research referencing nuisance and scam calls and texts in the New Year.

5.4 Members remain deeply concerned with the basic methodologies in place to match consumer data (postal addresses), particularly affecting consumers living in rural areas and flats. This had caused a flaw in the operation of the One Touch Switch (OTS) programme. The Panel recognised that this was an issue affecting multiple sectors, and suggested poor website design and a lack of signposting to guidance could be a contributing factor. The Panel recommended better unification of address data and the adoption of good design principles and accessibility and advised Ofcom to play whatever part it could in this, to make the market run smoothly for all consumers, focusing primarily on making switching easier for all.

5.5 The Panel wishes to better understand the safety of future planned non-voluntary Voice-over IP migrations, the consumer requirement for resilience solutions that last beyond the one-hour requirement imposed on communications providers and are keen to determine whether any lessons have been learned from past telecare incidents to drive better statutory guidance. Members asked whether enforceable protections were in place to empower Ofcom to take action to protect consumers.

5.6 Members were keen to understand if there have been any changes in the Government's approach to the planning of new infrastructure to increase mobile coverage in rural areas.



## 6. Mobile Monitoring update

- 6.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on their [monitoring of consumer outcomes within the mobile sector](#) which included examples of analysis and key findings.
- 6.2 Members liked the way in which age had been segmented within the findings, but questioned Ofcom if other demographics such as location, gender and disability status could also have been extracted from the statistics to determine more about an individual's usage data.
- 6.3 Members questioned whether any cyclical patterns such as people going on holiday were evident from the findings to better understand data utilisation.
- 6.4 Members queried whether the analysis looked at what was paid or what was spent, in terms of measuring fairness and suitability of options available to purchase to meet consumers' needs.
- 6.5 Members were curious to understand why older consumers spend more than other age groups within the market place and questioned whether this was in relation to Pay as you Go schemes being more expensive than monthly contracts or due to the fear of running out of data and purchasing more than is required. Members fear a lack of education and awareness could be a contributing factor.
- 6.6 Members were keen to establish what factors could attribute to a rise in consumer spend other than an in-contract price rise and questioned whether any analysis had been completed.

## 7. Trust in AI Findings by Dissonance Consulting

- 7.1 The Panel received a presentation from market research organisation Dissonance Consulting about AI knowledge, how organisations and individuals feel about AI, how it could impact human to human interaction and the triggers and barriers associated with AI adoption.
- 7.2 Members took the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of AI with the researchers and to examine the findings of the agency's research and what they mean for consumers in this sector.

## 8. Future of Premium Rate Services Regulation

- 8.1 The Panel received an update on the Future of Premium Rate Services Regulation which concentrated on key areas of focus and the impactful changes the PSA and Consumer Panel had achieved.
- 8.2 Members liaised with the PSA and Consumer Panel to ascertain the remaining areas of concern and look forward to working alongside Ofcom in the continuation of the protection of consumers using premium rate services, particularly those using Information, Connection and Signposting Services, which charge consumers to access telephone numbers that are already in the public domain.



**9. Panel Priorities**

9.1 Members reflected on their key milestones and achievements for 2024 and looked towards plans for 2025.

**10. Any Other Business**

10.1 There was no other business.