

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 27 June 2024 at 10.30 am

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Helen Froud (Chair)

Kay Allen

Rachel Burr

Judith Clifton

Lenna Cumberbatch

Robert Hammond

Richard Spencer

Michael Wardlow

Apologies

Michelle Goddard

In attendance

The Panel's Executive Team

Ofcom colleagues

Item
<p>1. Welcome and introduction</p> <p>1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting. 1.2 Members were reminded the meeting was being held within a pre-election period.</p>
<p>2. Declarations of Members' interests</p> <p>2.1 There were no declarations of interest.</p>
<p>3. Minutes of the meeting on 15 May 2024 and matters arising</p> <p>3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 15 May 2024 were APPROVED. 3.2 Additional agenda topics were provided to the Exec team to assist the planning of future meetings.</p>



4. Chair's update

- 4.1 The Chair and National Members provided an overview of the Panel's recent activity and stakeholder engagement across the UK prior to the announcement of the General Election.
- 4.2 The Chair confirmed that following open competition, recruitment interviews had taken place for a Member for Scotland, Member for Northern Ireland, Member for England and two additional Members, to cover vacancies which had previously arisen and are due to arise during 2024. All successful applicants will be Members for the Communications Consumer Panel and the Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People (ACOD).
- 4.3 The Ofcom Board would approve any recommendations and a list of preferred candidates would be sent to the Secretary of State for approval. Interviewed candidates had been advised that the process would likely take longer than usual, due to the General Election.

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 questioned whether the implementation date for the One Touch Switch programme would be achievable, and asked Ofcom if they were aware of future issues for Communications Providers (CPs) failing to reach the already stretched deadline date. An update for the next meeting would be welcomed.
- 5.3 Members appreciated comments on the significant change to the migration to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) implementation date and look forward to obtaining an update following Ofcom receiving the first scheduled commissions report.
- 5.4 Panel Members were pleased to note an increased level of visibility in local press on the migration to VoIP, and while they were pleased that there was a contingency plan in place for consumers who were not yet able to migrate to VOIP, they relayed fears for those consumers as the existing network degrades.
- 5.5 Members reflected on a news item provided to them in an information paper from their Executive team, which featured [Ghana's government implementing a National Roaming Policy](#) to allow network operators to leverage each other's infrastructure, so that consumers could stay connected in places where there was a lack of competition in terms of coverage. The Panel has previously advised Ofcom to consider National Roaming - sometimes also referred to as Domestic Roaming - as a solution to partial and full 'not-spots' and urged Ofcom to reconsider this option, particularly in the light of delays to the Shared Rural Network and with the switch-off of 2G and 3G networks imminent, which would create new 'not spots'.
- 5.6 The Panel noted anecdotal evidence of a change to postal collection times advertised on post boxes within residential areas. Many confirmed a last collection time of 9:00am except in town centres. Members questioned Ofcom if they were aware of a policy change and look forward to receiving an update.



5.7 The Panel continues to remain concerned about the potential failure of emergency alarms in vehicles (a service known as eCall) due to the 2G/3G switch off. Members look forward to receiving a technical update from a subject matter expert at a future meeting and would subsequently consider further advice to Ofcom.

6. Market Research Projects update

- 6.1 Members received an overview on Ofcom's market research programme for the forthcoming year.
- 6.2 The Panel were impressed to hear the broad range of material Ofcom are working on and look forward to viewing results once conclusions have been reached and reports are published.
- 6.3 Members requested further information from Ofcom on various research projects and look forward to receiving the data.
- 6.4 The Panel reminded Ofcom on the difference between the range of differing legislation in Northern Ireland and the UK Equality Act 2010. Members raised concerns that categorising research participants under equality characteristics could categorise people narrowly or artificially. They advised Ofcom that a way to be more inclusive would be to take a wider perspective on inclusivity, to discover what factors exclude or limit people taking part in research.

7. CCP Research Plan for 2024/2025

- 7.1 The Panel discussed past Communications Consumer Panel (CCP) research, along with projects soon to be published, including topics of concern, as informed by meetings with external stakeholders, and known areas of interest to Ofcom and other stakeholders, to assist in informing a research programme for the current financial year and beyond.
- 7.2 Members were given time to reflect and a paper would be sent after the meeting for Members' input.

8. Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Performance Scheme and ADR Review update

- 8.1 The Panel received an update from Ofcom on the current Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Performance Scheme and Ofcom's Review of the Scheme. The team provided the Panel with information on the level of case numbers, what customers are complaining about, current signposting of ADR schemes and potential forthcoming issues.
- 8.2 The Panel supported Ofcom's focus on ADR and highlighted areas where improvement could be made following further engagement with CPs.
- 8.3 Members highlighted questions around how Ofcom could make ADR schemes less intimidating and more accessible for consumers including people with neurodivergence, plus how to make schemes more accessible and how changes to industry could resolve complaints earlier on in the process.



- 8.4 Panel Members were concerned with the number of smaller CPs which had failed to sign up to an ADR scheme and questioned how many customers would be unfairly disadvantaged in not being able to resolve their complaint in a fair and satisfactory manner.
- 8.5 The Panel questioned whether Ofcom had completed an assessment to determine whether CPs should have resolved a complaint prior to the customer commencing on an ADR journey.
- 8.6 The Panel look forward to receiving a further update from Ofcom on the research and policy proposals ahead of the next consultation period.

9. Adults' Media Literacy update

- 9.1 The Panel received information from Ofcom on their latest [Adults' media use and attitudes](#) and [Adults' Media Lives](#) annual reports.
- 9.2 Members were enlightened to learn of Ofcom's findings in relation to how results differed between age groups and raised a question to how the industry could assist adults' engagement further with Media Literacy.
- 9.3 The Panel shared concerns that CPs have difficulty engaging with customers plus the high level of digital exclusion/digital debt among adults who are unable to use digital services provided through the NHS, pensions providers or other critical services in the UK.
- 9.4 Members look forward to receiving an update on the Making Sense of Media research on dis-information and misinformation in the coming year.

10. Children's Media Literacy update

- 10.1 The Panel received information from Ofcom on their latest [Children and Parents' Media use and attitudes](#) and [Children's Media Lives](#) annual reports.
- 10.2 Members were grateful to have received the information, however conveyed deep concern on the regulation thereof and whether attitudes can change, especially for parents who allow very young children use of a device to access inappropriate content and/or their own social media accounts whilst being under the recommended age limits.
- 10.3 The Panel were also intrigued and gravely concerned to learn how children approach the distinction between real and fake online content and their attitudes to viewing the material.

11. AOB

- 11.1 The Panel raised no other business.