

Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel and ACOD

on 20 April 2023 at 10.30 am

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

Present

Consumer Panel/ACOD

Rick Hill (Chair)

Kay Allen

Amanda Britain

Helen Froud

Clifford Harkness (items 8 to 11)

Sian Phipps

Michael Wardlow

Richard Williams

Apologies

Clifford Harkness (items 1 to 7)

Richard Spencer

In attendance

The Panel's Executive team

Ofcom colleagues

Representatives of Jigsaw (item 9)

Representatives of Yonder (item 7)

| Item |
|---|
| 1. Welcome and introduction |
| 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting. |
| 2. Declarations of Members' interests |
| 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest. |
| 3. Minutes of the meeting on 23 March 2023 and matters arising |
| 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 23 March 2023 were APPROVED , subject to minor amendments. |



4. Chair's update

- 4.1 The Panel noted the Chair's update, which provided an overview of the Panel's recent activities. The Panel's Nations' Members also provided updates on recent activity and stakeholder engagement across each of the UK Nations.
- 4.2 The Panel expressed its belief that CPs should do more to provide and promote support to consumers who were struggling financially, having found that information on social tariffs on some CPs' apps and/or websites information was either hidden or non-existent. Furthermore, not all of the main CPs offered a social tariff. At regular catch-up meetings with CPs, the Chair would flag the Panel's concerns and seek to understand the steps they were taking to promote available support to consumers.
- 4.3 The Panel discussed the possible consumer implications of CPs moving to digital services and products, particularly in relation to accessibility and digital exclusion, and believed that more should be done to understand how CPs were working to explore, identify and mitigate the possible impacts.

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 The Panel asked if Ofcom could share any insights on how many users had accessed the information on its website regarding 2G/3G switch-off. Members also welcomed the addition of the FAQ regarding emergency video relay, after having first raised the issue with Ofcom in November 2022 (see para 3.3)¹. The Panel remained concerned that some equipment such as 3G handsets were likely to become obsolete following the switch-off and, these concerns had been exacerbated by the UK Government's recent emergency alert system not being compatible with older mobile handsets using 2G/3G connectivity. The Panel continued to stress the importance of raising consumer awareness of market changes so consumers were not left behind. To help raise awareness, the Panel planned to write to an online retailer who specialised in producing mobile handsets that were accessible to a wide range of consumers and continued to sell 3G handsets.
- 5.3 Members asked whether consumers whose provider did not provide a social tariff were able to switch to a provider who did without incurring an early termination fee.
- 5.4 Members noted that the volume of scam calls reported to Ofcom had fallen, however, they highlighted that Ofcom's process for reporting scam calls was cumbersome and could act as barrier. Ofcom colleagues welcomed the Panel's suggestion of implementing a simpler reporting process for consumers.

¹ [Communications Consumer Panel/ACOD Minutes - November 2022](#)



5.5 Having asked for an update on Ofcom's engagement with international regulators on migration to VoIP, Ofcom colleagues advised that an update on the findings would follow soon. The Panel would also share its latest research findings on migration to VoIP with the team soon.

5.6 Members were interested to hear the findings and key learnings from the 3G switch-off pilots that Vodafone was undertaking in Plymouth and Basingstoke and Ofcom colleagues offered to share information at a future meeting.

5.7 The Panel was disappointed to hear that the deadline for CPs to implement a new 'one-touch' switching process had been missed and sought information on next steps.

6. BBC Audiences Review

6.1 The Panel received an update on Ofcom's review of specific audience groups, including those from lower socio-economic groups, who were persistently less satisfied with the BBC to better understand their habits, and how the BBC is delivering for them. In support of the review, the Panel encouraged the team to consider a wide range of consumer characteristics such as age, ethnicity and geographical location to help inform the review.

6.2 In discussions around the type of language to use in the review, the Panel encouraged the team to adopt the social model of disability, consider the impacts of intersectionality and include an explanation in the review on the terminology and why it had been used.

6.3 The Panel believed that the BBC needed to increase its engagement with wider audiences and looked forward to hearing how the review was progressing at a future meeting.

7. Panel research update: Migration to VoIP

7.1 Representatives of Yonder provided Members with an overview of the key findings from the Panel's second round of research on migration to VoIP, exploring consumer awareness of the migration and reliance on telephony. The Panel discussed the findings with interest and looked forward to publishing the research in the coming weeks.

8. Panel research update: The experiences of rural consumers using communications services

8.1 The Panel's Research Manager provided an overview of the emerging findings from the Panel's research on the experiences of rural consumers using communications services across the UK. The Panel noted the findings with interest and looked forward to a fuller debrief from the research agency in May.

9. Panel research update: Social tariffs and younger consumers

9.1 Representatives of Jigsaw provided Members with an overview of the preliminary findings from the Panel's two research projects on consumer awareness and experience of applying



for social tariffs; and the experiences of younger consumers navigating the communications market. The Panel looked forward to a further update in future.

10. Ofcom's research on online scams and fraudulent activity

10.1 The Panel received an update on Ofcom's research into online scams and fraud and discussed the findings with interest. Members asked for further insights on how long it took consumers to identify a scam, how likely they were to report it, and to which organisations.

11. AOB

11.1 There was no other business.