

Minutes of the 93rd meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel
on 20 November 2012 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel

Jo Connell (Chairman)
Chris Holland
Craig Tillotson (awaiting DCMS approval)
Kim Brook
Libby Kinney
Mairi Macleod

In attendance

David Edwards
Graham Howell (item 10)
Fiona Lennox
Jonathan Pillinger-Cork
Other Ofcom colleagues (items 4-5, 7-9, 11-13)

Apologies

Bob Twitchin

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Craig Tillotson had been appointed as a member of the Panel, subject to DCMS approval. He was welcomed to his first meeting by the Chairman and fellow members.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Craig Tillotson informed members that he was a deferred member of the Everything Everywhere Pension Scheme and the Vodafone Pension Scheme. For information he also advised members that he was the business owner for the Payments Council's Mobile Payments Project.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 24 October 2012, matters arising and progress on actions

3.1 Subject to minor amendment, members **APPROVED** the draft minutes for signature by Chris Holland who had Chaired the October meeting in the Chairman's absence.

3.2 Members had been copied a paper presenting some of the key findings from Ofcom's recent Customer Service Satisfaction report due for publication shortly. The Panel's next catch-up meeting with BT was in the process of being arranged, at which CLI-based blocking would be raised. The process to contract a new Panel media adviser was underway.

4. Mobile coverage

4.1 Members had been provided with a paper to update them on Ofcom's work on mobile coverage and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom's most recent analysis of UK mobile

coverage indicated that 99.7% of UK premises could receive an **outdoor 2G** signal from at least one operator. Recent impacts on coverage were: the creation of Everything Everywhere (EE), bringing together the mobile networks of T-Mobile and Orange; infrastructure/site sharing by EE and Three and by Vodafone and O2; and the Government's Mobile Infrastructure Project. Improvements on the rail network were expected to be a longer term gain. Ofcom was engaged in research on consumers' mobile experience in different parts of the UK.

4.2 There was discussion of issues including the frequency of dropped calls; outdoor and indoor coverage and femtocells as a means of improving the latter; the mobile experience of SMEs; the 2009 Panel report *Mobile coverage: the consumer perspective* and the value in updating that research; coverage obligations associated with 4G rollout; and national roaming as a solution to gaps in coverage [Note: Ofcom had provided a briefing note to the Panel on roaming and infrastructure sharing in June 2012.]. It was **AGREED** that the Panel would return to discussion of mobile coverage at a meeting in the New Year.

5. Spectrum and DTT update

5.1 Members had been provided with a slide pack to update them on the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum (4G auction) and on related spectrum clearance issues. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and there was discussion of issues including support for consumers likely to suffer TV interference from 4G base stations; filters to combat that interference and for consumers whose TV installation employed a mast-head amplifier, a voucher scheme to help with the installation costs; and Digital Mobile Spectrum Ltd (DMSL), the company set up by the mobile operators to provide support, including guidance to consumers on the fitting of filters and amplifiers.

5.2 Members **AGREED** to invite DMSL to meet the Panel in the New Year; it was **NOTED** that former Panel member Roger Darlington was a member of DMSL's interim Oversight Board; and it was suggested that DCMS consideration of a kite mark for filters could be extended to include amplifiers and installers. Ofcom colleagues would continue to keep the Panel informed of developments over the coming months.

6. Developments of interest to CCP

6.1 Members had been provided with an information paper capturing recent news stories relating to developments in communications. There was brief discussion of non-geographic numbering, their use by Government departments and the high call charges that are incurred. Fiona Lennox would raise the issue with the Government Digital Service. The Panel had discussed non-geographic numbering with Ofcom colleagues at its June meeting and it was **AGREED** that the Panel should return to discussion with the Ofcom colleagues concerned. An issue that could be raised was the use of 087X numbers by alarm companies and the costs borne by their customers.

7. General Condition 15 (GC15)

7.1 Members had been provided with an information paper to update them on Ofcom's work to review GC15 (Special Measures for End-users with

Disabilities) and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion. Part of the review was focussed on the scope for extension of GC15 to include broadband services. Members **NOTED** that GC15 currently contained a duty on communications providers to consult the Panel to ensure that the requirements and interests of disabled end-users are fully taken into account in the development and provision of their services. It was **AGREED** that it would be useful to delve into the background to that requirement and to consider whether it would be more appropriate for Ofcom to be the body consulted.

8. Telecoms affordability

8.1 Members had been provided with a paper on Ofcom's findings on the affordability of telecoms services based on analysis undertaken in the context of recent price rises in the fixed voice and mobile sector. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and discussion touched on issues including rising levels of telecoms debt. It was **NOTED** that Citizens Advice (CA) had seen a significant increase in the number of related cases and enquiries it had been handling. Members were interested to know more about the causes of telecoms debt and the matter would be raised at Ofcom's next meeting with CA.

9. Broadband speeds/Traffic management

9.1 Members had been provided with a paper to update them on the work undertaken by Ofcom to improve the information available to consumers about broadband speeds, including a mystery shopping exercise undertaken earlier in the year, and with a paper on traffic management. Members **NOTED** that the Broadband Stakeholder Group had recently facilitated publication of a voluntary industry code of practice on traffic management transparency for broadband services.

9.2 Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and there was discussion of traffic management issues including the low level of consumer awareness, consumer information and consumer research. Ofcom would share its proposed traffic management survey questions with the Panel, giving members the opportunity to provide comments. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom's recent *Infrastructure Report 2012* contained a chapter on traffic management and this would be copied to members.

10. Governance update

10.1 Graham Howell joined the meeting and provided the Panel with a brief update on recent and current issues on Ofcom's agenda, including the impending 4G auction and related security issues; Ofcom's Annual Plan 2013/14; licensing of local television; and consumer complaints about Royal mail's delivery to neighbour scheme. Members **NOTED** that Royal Mail had provided a leaflet to all UK households about the scheme and that households were able to opt out if they wished. On a matter related to governance, the Chairman reported that she had met with the Ofcom Board the previous week and SMEs' experience of communications services had been discussed.

11. Quarterly telecoms complaints report

11.1 Members had been provided with a paper giving an overview of Ofcom's quarterly *Telecoms and Pay TV Complaints* publication, the key findings of the most recent report (Q2 2012) and the preliminary results likely to be included in the next publication (Q3 2012). An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting for discussion. Members were interested to know the SME/residential consumer split for the report data and enquiries would be made about the availability of that information.

12. Economic geography

12.1 Members had received a draft copy of Ofcom's Economic geography report provisionally entitled 'Availability and intervention'. During discussion with Ofcom colleagues, Members provided a number of detailed comments on the draft, including the suggestion of inclusion of reference to the Panel's recent research report *Bridging the Gap: Sustaining online engagement*. Ofcom expected to publish the report in January 2013. It was pointed out that whilst the idea of the predictability of market failure had been included, the point about it being predictable in time as well as in place had not been. The implication that parallel approaches/technologies should be considered at an early stage to address the problems for the 'final 10%' had also not been included in the draft report.

13. Ofcom's Annual Plan

13.1 Members were provided with a paper outlining the latest draft priorities, major work areas and programmatic items for inclusion in Ofcom's Annual Plan 2013/14. The draft Annual Plan would be discussed by the Ofcom Board and published for consultation in December. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and Panel members made a number of comments in response to the paper. In particular the Panel felt that it was important to give prominence to consumers making the wording of an Ofcom priority "To ensure that consumers' communications needs were met by markets that worked for them" as opposed to "Helping communications markets work for consumers".

14. Any other business

14.1 There was a brief discussion of possible research projects and topics for investigation by the Panel. Those suggested by Members, and **NOTED**, were scams; consumer tolerance; an update of earlier Panel mobile coverage research; the consumer journey; issues of consumer tolerance; and SMEs use of mobile data. Following discussion there was broad **AGREEMENT** that the consumer experience of those that experience communications problems but did not make formal complaints could be the focus of a research study.