

Minutes of the 94th meeting of the Communications Consumer Panel
on 12 December 2012 at 10.30

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

Present

Consumer Panel

Jo Connell (Chairman)

Kim Brook

Jaya Chakrabarti (awaiting DCMS approval)

Chris Holland

Libby Kinney

Mairi Macleod (via video-link, items 1-9)

Craig Tillotson (awaiting DCMS approval)

Bob Twitchin

In attendance

David Edwards

Fiona Lennox

Jonathan Pillinger-Cork

Other Ofcom colleagues (items 4-8, 10-12)

Colleagues from PhonepayPlus (item 9)

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Jaya Chakrabarti had been appointed as a member of the Panel, subject to DCMS approval. She was welcomed to her first meeting by the Chairman and fellow members.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Anticipating the video relay agenda item, Bob Twitchin's membership of Access to Communications was **NOTED**.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 20 November 2012, matters arising and progress on actions

3.1 Subject to minor amendment, members **APPROVED** the draft minutes for signature by the Chairman. The issue of difficulties with opening some emailed file attachments was being pursued with Ofcom. Members also **NOTED** that use of non-geographic numbers by Government departments had been raised with the Government Digital Service (GDS).

4. Political update

4.1 An Ofcom colleague joined the meeting and provided an oral update on various relevant Government and legislative issues. These included the recent publication of the Leveson Report; the Communications Review; and the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and desire to remove the burdens of any unnecessary or inefficient regulation, including a review of processes to make appeals quicker and easier.

5. Consumer update

5.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to update them on a range of consumer issues. Members **NOTED** that Ofcom expected to publish a progress report on its work on unexpectedly high bills in the New Year; a call for inputs was about to be published on possible improvements to GC15 (Special Measures for End-Users with Disabilities); work was progressing to embed high level principles in the Ombudsman Services and CISAS ADR schemes; and initiatives were being undertaken to refresh awareness of the Consumer Interest Toolkit amongst Ofcom colleagues. Ofcom colleagues agreed to provide clarification on a query related to superfast broadband take-up.

6. Consumer Experience

6.1 Members had received papers providing an overview of Ofcom's latest Consumer Experience research which tracks key trends in consumers' use of, and attitudes to, communications services and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. The research and an evaluation report were due for publication in January, when a stakeholder event would take place at Ofcom. The Panel's Chairman would speak at the event on the Panel research *Bridging the Gap* and the Panel's potential workplan. There was discussion of research topics including bundling and switching; erroneous transfers and save activity; the experience of SMEs and the use by some of domestic phone and internet packages; use of postal services; use of communications services by disabled people; and devices and tablet ownership. Members **NOTED** that In 2008 Ofcom had published a research report on *People with learning disabilities and communications services* and a link to the research would be copied to members.

7. Non-geographic numbering

7.1 Members had received papers providing details of Ofcom's plans to reform the UK's regime for non-geographic calls, with a statement due for publication in the New Year. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion of topics including implementation of an 'unbundled tariff' for 084, 087, 09 and other number ranges; use of 087 by alarm companies and Government departments; call charge transparency; the proposed charge cap on 09 numbers; and the communications campaign to publicise changes to the numbering regime. It was noted that the transparency regime needed to clarify what proportion of premium rate minimum call charges went to operators vs. service providers for very short duration calls, as well as the split in normal duration calls. This was a particular issue for alarm companies when a daily 5 second line check call could generate a minimum call charge of 15p, for example.

8. Video relay

8.1 Members had been provided with a paper to update the Panel on Ofcom's work on video relay. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting and explained further the steps Ofcom was taking to support a voluntary initiative to deliver provision, together with related stakeholder engagement. The Panel

expressed its significant support for the initiative.

9. PhonepayPlus

9.1 Members had been provided with copies of a bi-yearly report outlining the activities of PhonepayPlus during Q1 and Q2 2012/13. Colleagues from PhonepayPlus joined the meeting and discussion included PhonepayPlus' Code of Practice; consumer complaints; its business plan; micropayments; and the prospect of changes to legislation through the Communications Bill. Members **NOTED** that PhonepayPlus was currently consulting on its *Business Plan & Budget 2013/14* to which the Panel expected to submit a response.

10. Citizen's update/Media literacy

10.1 Members had been provided with a paper summarising Ofcom's recent *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report* findings. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting. There was discussion of the range of devices being used to go online in the home; the impact of the internet on daily life; parents' perception of risk, its likelihood and severity; and parental controls and mediation. Members were then given an overview of Ofcom's Online Citizens project, including work to assess Ofcom's role and activity to date in relation to the citizen interest; to assess awareness of the citizen interest within Ofcom and to understand the perspectives of stakeholders.

11. Price comparison scheme

11.1 Members had been provided with a paper to outline Ofcom's plans to review its accreditation scheme for Price Comparison Websites (PCW) together with the results of related research due to be published in Ofcom's forthcoming Consumer Experience report. Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting for discussion which touched on issues including audit fees and the expense involved for smaller companies running PCWs. Members **NOTED** that the proposed actions which might lead to a consultation, if appropriate.

12. Beyond Copper

12.1 Members had been provided with a paper and Ofcom colleagues joined the meeting to inform the Panel about a project set up to inform thinking for a future phase of Ofcom's switching review, with the focus on switching between cable technologies, fibre-to-the premises technologies and pay-TV services, ie beyond copper-based services. Market research had been undertaken to inform Ofcom about project-related reactive save activity. The Panel wished to be kept informed about the research findings.

13. Panel workplan

13.1 Members **NOTED** that Chris Holland had led a session at a recent meeting of the Consumer Forum for Communications to invite views on the Panel's priorities for the coming year. Members were now asked to consider and score possible priorities for inclusion in the Panel's workplan 2013/14. Scores would be analysed following the meeting, as part of a process to arrive at a Panel workplan. Discussion touched briefly on 2009 research undertaken by the

Panel, *Mobile coverage: the consumer perspective*, and current research being undertaken by Ofcom.

14. Any other business

14.1 For information, members had been provided with a paper capturing recent consumer orientated news stories relating to developments in communications.