

Minutes

Consumer Panel Meeting No 25

Tuesday 19 November 2024, 10.00-12.00

Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Chair: Rhian Johns

Consumer Panel members

Louise Baxter
Patrick Bligh-Cheesman
Paul Eaves
Nicola Wilson

Phone-paid Services Authority

David Edmonds
Jonathan Levack
Sarah-Louise Prouse
Jo Prowse
Simon Towler

Minutes: Emma Hurt

Apologies:

1. Introduction
1.1 Introduction and apologies Rhian welcomed members to the final Consumer Panel meeting. There were no apologies.
1.2 Previous meeting minutes and action log The previous meeting's minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. Matters arising were picked up during the meeting.
1.3 Thanks to the Panel from David David Edmonds, PSA Chairman joined the meeting to thank the panel for their commitment and contributions in their role as an essential sounding board and consumer voice to PSA.

<p>David noted the panel’s areas for future consideration by Ofcom’s Communication Consumer Panel which he will include in his feedback to Ofcom.</p> <p>1.4 Executive update</p> <p>The Executive provided an update. The key highlights are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There has been a further significant drop in contacts.• Complaints remain very low with around 80 per month compared to 150 a month in the previous year, and just one ICSS complaint so far this financial year.• an update was provided on remaining enforcement cases <p>An extended annual report for 2023-24, reflecting in more depth than usual and covering roughly the last ten years, will be published in December including a contribution from Rhian on the work of the Panel. Copies of the report will be sent to Panel members.</p> <p>The Panel thanked the Executive for the update</p>

<p>2. Theme</p>
<p>2.1 PSA Closure and Transfer</p> <p>The Executive provided an update on the transfer of PRS regulation and staff to Ofcom and plans for the closure of PSA.</p> <p>The Regulation of Premium Rate Services Order 2024 (“the Order”) and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Transfer of Staff to the Office of Communications) Regulations 2024 (“the Regulations”) were laid before Parliament on 24 October. The objection period for the Order and the Regulations finishes on 2 December and it is at this point the Parliamentary procedures are formally concluded.</p> <p>PSA has published a notice on 31 October on the wind down of its activities in preparation for transfer of responsibilities to Ofcom and closure.</p> <p>The Order comes into force on 1 February 2025 with Ofcom having regulatory responsibility from that date. All staff will either transfer to Ofcom or cease employment with PSA on 31 January. All office holder terms of office including of course Panel members’ terms will end on 31 January as well.</p> <p>An Audit team will be in place after 31 January 2025, to oversee the final audit by the NAO and to prepare the final Annual Report and Accounts for 2024/25 to be laid before Parliament as required as a public body.</p> <p>2.2. Panel handover paper and meeting with Ofcom CCP – with Ian Strawhorne</p> <p>The Panel was joined by Ian Strawhorne, Director of Enforcement at Ofcom.</p>

<p>The Panel discussed the issues set out in their handover paper, including their concern that Ofcom should be continuing monitoring of ICSS, Alert Services and Children's services.</p> <p>The Panel were keen to understand the range of enforcement deterrents and monitoring effectiveness and how this will be managed by Ofcom. The Panel referred to PSA's regulatory power to prohibit individuals from the market, which the panel views as an effective deterrent.</p> <p>Whilst this regulatory power is not one Ofcom was able to adopt within the SI, Ofcom has other powers and regulatory tools that it can deploy, such as, in this case, referring individuals to the Insolvency Service.</p> <p>The Enforcement team at Ofcom also covers areas of supervision, monitoring and compliance and the majority of PSA colleagues transferring to Ofcom will be joining the Enforcement team.</p> <p>Ian reassured the Panel of his commitment to ensuring the market remains well regulated. He will also ensure that Ofcom's Communications Consumer Panel will be briefed on the market and the issues. He will be appearing before the Ofcom Panel on 12 December with Rhian and Jo joining him for that meeting.</p> <p>The Panel were reassured to hear Ofcom will be committing the same level of resources to monitoring and supervision for PRS services, ensuring the focus is not lost. The Panel also noted that Ofcom has a strong focus on children's safety online and resources to monitor children's services. This was another example of how Ofcom's wider remit and resources would be able to complement its regulation of phone-paid services.</p> <p>The Panel thanked Ian for the useful discussion.</p>

<p>3. Any other business and closure from Rhian</p>
<p>Rhian closed the meeting by reflecting on how rewarding and a privilege her role as chair has been. Rhian noted how supported the panel had been by the Executive, the panel felt listened to and heard and views welcomed.</p> <p>This collaboration it was agreed, has been equally rewarding to Panel members.</p> <p>Rhian recorded a special thank you to Jonathan, citing his guidance, wisdom, and openness as a fantastic support to her as Chair and to the Panel.</p> <p>Jo and Simon also recorded their thanks to Rhian and the Panel.</p>

Date of the next meeting: no further meetings are planned for the Consumer Panel

Action log

Actions from the previous meeting	Status	Notes
All actions from previous meetings have been completed		