

MINUTES OF THE 13TH MEETING
PHONE-PAID SERVICES AUTHORITY CONSUMER PANEL

Wednesday 29 September 2021

13.30-15.30

Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Chair: Rhian Johns

Consumer Panel members

Patrick Bligh-Cheesman

Paul Eaves

Fred Forbes

Nicola Wilson

Phone-paid Services Authority

Gavin Daykin

Jonathan Levack

Sarah Louise Prouse

Simon Towler

Apologies

Louise Baxter

Minutes: Emma Hurt

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

Rhian welcomed members to the Consumer Panel meeting. Apologies were recorded as above.

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 Executive update

The Executive provided an update:

Complaint numbers continue to fall except in one area where ICSS (Information, Connection and/or Signposting Services) remain the most complained about service type with between 20-30 complaints per month. Recently a national advice line fell victim to an ICSS service affecting a number of people already in a vulnerable situation.

Since the last meeting, the consumer awareness piece on ICSS broadcast on BBC Watchdog! PSA continues to work with Ofcom and DCMS to explore what more might be done about ICSS. Policy options such as price caps on the 09 number sequence; partial ban (conditioned not to connect to 0800 numbers); and total ban have been recommended. Further actions by PSA are limited by its powers as a regulator.

The Panel agreed the Watchdog! segment was very informative.

The Executive have recently undertaken media training and will be working through opportunities to produce short form consumer advice film clips.

PSA responded to the BEIS Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy Driving growth and delivering competitive markets that work for consumers consultation. The Executive noted it was a wide-ranging consultation with direct interest in auto renewal. The response was in line with Code 15 guidance.

1.4 Panel update

The Executive has spoken to Panel members individually to ascertain aspiration to sit a second term. Further details will be shared in the New Year.

The Panel are keen to understand what data and metrics might be collected and monitored to understand and track the impact of Code 15 and the shift to the supervision approach with particular focus on the impact on consumers.

The Panel are interested in exploring ways to obtain more extensive consumer insight and to track impact on areas the panel have had input on. One approach could be to receive regular data and trends covering:

- website page hits and items such as blog posts that have been particularly well read
- social media interactions
- customer satisfaction scores on direct interactions with PSA

ACTION: The Executive to consider how best to present the impact of Code 15 and improved consumer protection.

ACTION: The Executive to consider presenting consumer facing data trends at future meetings.

2. Code 15 update development and guidance

The Executive updated the Panel on the progress of the Code 15 project, covering its development and guidance

The Panel agrees a short guidance note setting out consumer expectation and rights would be useful.

The Executive confirmed specific guidance for consumers is as yet undecided.

The Panel suggested drafting a customer care document to include a short description of what PSA are and its remit.

The Panel recommended using plain English throughout the consumer facing sections on the website. The Executive confirmed the website will have a built-in functionality to obtain additional clarity on specific points.

ACTION: The Consumer Panel to provide input on consumer guidance.

ACTION: The Executive to look at using plain English on consumer facing sections of the website.

ACTION: A Code 15 update will remain on the Consumer Panel agenda.

3. Theme – Market update

The Executive presented on the key findings from the Annual Market Review (AMR)

The AMR gives an overview of the market trends market during 2020 /21. The findings are based on insights obtained through:

- An in-depth survey of 5000 users of phone-paid services.
- Interviews with 17 industry stakeholders/service providers
- Undertaking an extensive market modelling exercise forecasting future spend on phone-paid services.

Headline findings

- Consumer spending fell by 2.7% in FY2021.
- Most spending channels declined, although charity text donations rose significantly.
- Subscription Special conditions had an effect on PSMS and operator billing revenues.
- Operator billing remains the largest spending channel with TV, radio engagement and charities key growth areas
- The phone-paid services market is expected to be worth £599.5 million in 2021-22, representing a 4.6% decrease YoY.
- All spending channels are expected to be in decline, though for charity donations, this will represent a return to the norm after an exceptional 2020-21.

- Market consolidation is expected to continue; operator billing and premium SMS will make up 78% of the market. Games, TV and radio engagement and entertainment will account for 63% of spend.

Net Promoter Score

One unexpected feature of the report was a fall in Net Promoter Score (NPS) across all service types. One possible explanation for the fall is that the survey was undertaken during March and April 2021, and it is considered possible that the generally difficult conditions of the pandemic made for less happy consumers who were then less likely to positively recommend services.

4. Any other business

The December meeting is proposed to be held in person, with the option for hybrid attendance dependent on the Covid restrictions in place at the time.

Post Meeting Note: the December meeting will be held online.

No further business was discussed.

Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 7 December 2021

Action log

Actions carried forward from previous meetings	Status	Notes
The Executive will report back to the panel on the outcome of the (ICSS) calls.	Open	
Actions from September Consumer Panel meeting		
The Executive to consider how best to present the impact of Code 15 and improved consumer protection.	Open	
The Executive to consider presenting consumer facing data trends at future meetings.	Open	
The Consumer Panel to provide input on consumer guidance.	Open	
The Executive to look at using plain English on consumer facing sections of the website.	Open	
A Code 15 update will remain on the Consumer Panel agenda.	Ongoing	