

MINUTES OF THE 23rd MEETING

PHONE-PAID SERVICES AUTHORITY CONSUMER PANEL

Thursday 14 March 2024, 11.00-13.00

Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Chair: Rhian Johns

Consumer Panel members

Patrick Bligh-Cheesman

Paul Eaves

Nicola Wilson

Phone-paid Services Authority

Simon Chong

Jonathan Levack

Sarah-Louise Prouse

Simon Towler

Minutes: Emma Hurt

Apologies: Louise Baxter

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

Rhian welcomed members to the Consumer Panel meeting. Apologies were received from Louise Baxter.

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. The key highlights are:

Data trends are consistent with previous meetings, contacts have declined from 8500 a month, and complaints continue to fall to an average 150 a month,

ICSS complaints continue to fall from roughly 40 a month to around 3 a month in the period October to February. Alert services are the source of the majority of complaints and a priority for enforcement activity. An ICSS monitoring scan run in February no ICSS ads in the paid ads compared with the first ICSS review where hundreds of ads were found.

Alert services – Enforcement action is ongoing against three providers involved with alert services.

ACTION: the Executive to send alert service examples to Panel.

The Chair of the Panel supported by the Executive met with the Chair of the Ofcom Consumer Panel (CCP) to explore the possibility of a panel member joining the Ofcom group. While the Chair of the CCP was amenable to the idea, all CCP appointments follow the strict Public Appointments procedures, which includes DSIT Secretary of State approval as the CCP is a statutory body. Ofcom and the CCP will look into whether some sort of temporary observer status may be possible. Any subsequent appointments to the CCP would follow their normal processes. The Chair of the CCP is standing down and an invitation to the incoming CCP chair to attend our final meeting in June will be issued once the appointment is completed.

1.4 Panel update

A Panel Member asked whether data on under 18 uses of mobile phones engaging in PRS is available. The Executive confirmed there are strict rules and restrictions in place on surveying under 18's. The Executive will highlight this area of concern on the panel's behalf to Ofcom Consumer Panel.

2. Theme

2.1 Future of Regulation

The Executive provided an update on the transfer process and key impacts and future of PRS regulation.

There were 26 responses to the consultation. Detailed issues raised included

Definitions and matters of scope – mainly requests asking to clarify or confirm around wording.

All of the responses support the transfer.

Next steps:

Ofcom is considering the responses, drafting the Statement and considering any amendments to the SI.

The Statement and SI must be reviewed and approved by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. When this process is complete, the parliamentary process will commence, engaging with Parliamentary officials to put the SI on Parliaments business

calendar. This process, known as triage, takes approx. 10 weeks. The final statement will be published in that window.

The SI is then laid before parliament on an agreed date there must be a period of 21 days before an SI comes in to force – once an SI has been laid that period continues to run regardless of recess or dissolution of parliament.

The target date for implementation and transfer is on track for 1 October 2024

Engagement with Ofcom has intensified, and significant activity continues on the complex winding up process to ensure effective regulation continues.

3. Policy

3.1 ICSS

The Executive presented on ICSS following the latest round of data collection. The latest data sought to assess what the impact of the September 2023 Code changes had on the market and consumer engagement with ICSS. The key highlights are:

- The Code changes have had a significant impact on the market.

Monthly call volume and spend have dropped significantly since Code changes were introduced. In June 2023 call volume was at 160,000 a month, this number has dropped to approx. 60,000 in December 2023.

The Panel thanked the Executive and observed this work combined with engagement and enforcement activity has led to an effective clear up of this area of industry.

4. Any other business

No further business was discussed

Date of the next meeting: 13 June 2024

Action log

Actions from the previous meeting	Status	Notes
The Executive to check with AM if can differentiate between PAYG and contract billing from a vulnerable consumer link.	Open	
Actions from the March meeting		
The Executive to send alert service examples to Panel.	Complete	