
**Terms of reference for:
National Advisory Committees**

Approved by the Ofcom Board on 13 November 2018

1. Statutory obligations

- 1.1 The Communications Act 2003 requires Ofcom to establish and maintain Advisory Committees for the different parts of the United Kingdom¹. Section 20 of the Act requires that “each Committee shall consist of a Chairman appointed by Ofcom and such other Members appointed by Ofcom as Ofcom thinks fit”. The function of the Committees “shall be to provide advice to Ofcom (including other Committees established by Ofcom) about the interests and opinions, in relation to communications matters, of persons living in the part of the United Kingdom for which the committee has been established.” The Committees may also at the request of the Consumer Panel, provide advice about those interests and opinions to the Consumer Panel but only with the consent of Ofcom.
- 1.2 In appointing Members of the Advisory Committees, Ofcom is required by the Act to ensure that Members are “able to represent the interests and opinions, in relation to communications matters, of persons living in the part of the United Kingdom for which the committee has been established”.
- 1.3 “Communication matters” in this Section are those set out in Section 3 of the Communications Act 2003.

2. Advisory Committee remit

- 2.1 The primary task of each Advisory Committee is to identify those aspects of Ofcom’s current work and of communications in general which are of particular importance to the diverse regions and communities of the United Kingdom, and to work with the Ofcom Executive on these topics. The Committees should also be prepared to respond to specific consultation requests from Ofcom on matters where a Nation-specific perspective will be valuable.
- 2.2 The remit of each Advisory Committee will be to:
- seek to identify issues affecting the communications sector in its part of the United Kingdom;
 - provide advice to Ofcom about general and specific issues concerning the communications sectors arising within the Committee’s part of the United Kingdom;
 - provide advice and comment as required on matters brought to the Committees by Ofcom;
 - offer comment as appropriate on consultations undertaken by Ofcom;
 - where requested by the Content Board, to provide specific advice to that Board on matters relating to television, radio and other content in services regulated by Ofcom;
 - where so requested by the Consumer Panel, to provide formal advice to the Panel on matters in the communications sector affecting consumers in the Committee’s part of the United Kingdom;

¹ For England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

- provide Ofcom with advice on matters relating to its responsibilities for the promotion of media literacy in the Committee's part of the United Kingdom; and
- advise on any relevant annual report that covers issues within the communications sector in the Committee's part of the United Kingdom.

3. The operation of the Advisory Committees

3.1 The committee shall be operated so that:

- the Committees will comprise of up to nine Members at any time unless otherwise agreed by the Ofcom Board;
- a quorum for any meeting will consist of half of the total number of Members (rounded up to the nearest whole number);
- Members' attendance by telephone or videolink is permissible for the purposes of determining a quorum;
- A formal agenda and papers shall, where possible, be circulated electronically to all Members at least three working days prior to the date of the Meeting;
- Where the Chair of the Committees considers it appropriate, business may take place by electronic communications, including email;
- the Committees will be chaired by a Member of the Committee who is appointed by Ofcom. The Directors, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales with other colleagues will support the work of their respective Committee;
- the Committees will meet not less than three times and not more than five times a year. Members may engage with Ofcom colleagues between those meetings where appropriate;
- the Ofcom Board, Content Board and Consumer Panel Members for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, have a standing invitation to attend all meetings of the Advisory Committee for their part of the United Kingdom. Members of the Ofcom Board, Content Board and Consumer Panel may attend the Advisory Committee as observers. Whilst they are welcome to participate in discussions or to give their own views they are not part of the Committees as such and are not bound by the views of the Advisory Committees;
- agendas will be prepared by each Committee Chair, in discussion with the respective Director, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, with an invitation to any Member of their Advisory Committee to submit matters for inclusion on the agenda;
- a formal minute will be taken of all Advisory Committee meetings. Once approved by the Chair of the Committee, a note of the matters discussed at each Committee meeting will be published on the Ofcom website;
- the minutes of each Advisory Committee meeting will be submitted to the full Ofcom Board for noting. Items for the attention of the Content Board, the Consumer Panel or the Ofcom Executive will be communicated by the respective Director, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. The Content Board and Consumer Panel Members for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales may also reflect on discussions at the Advisory Committees within the meetings of those bodies;

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- the views of the Advisory Committees may also be communicated as appropriate to Ofcom through specific submissions and/or letters from the Committee Chair.
- 3.2 Members of the Committees may be asked for their views and advice by individual Members of the Consumer Panel. Such requests should be copied for information to the respective Director, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. Where the Consumer Panel wishes to receive a formal response from an Advisory Committee, requests will be made via the Advisory Committee's coordinator.
- 3.3 The Advisory Committees for the different parts of the United Kingdom will be kept informed of issues and developments within Ofcom as a whole either through formal papers prepared and submitted to the Committees in advance or by presentations from Ofcom executives at meetings. It will be open to Members of the Committees, through the Chair, to request such information on any topic within Ofcom's remit.