

Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland: Terms of Reference

Approved by the Ofcom Board 24 May 2016

Statutory Obligations

1. The Communications Act requires Ofcom to establish and maintain an Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland. 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 Committee “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” Northern Ireland. The Committee 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.
2. In appointing Members of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland, 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” Northern Ireland.
3. “Communication matters” in this Section are those set out in Section 3 of the Communications Act.

Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland Remit

4. The primary task of the 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 Northern Ireland, and to work with the Ofcom Executive to inform themselves on these topics. The Committee should also be prepared to respond to specific consultation requests from Ofcom on matters where a non-metropolitan perspective will be valuable.
5. The remit of the Advisory Committee will be to:
 - seek to identify issues affecting the communications sector in England
 - provide advice to Ofcom about general and specific issues concerning the communications sectors arising within England
 - provide advice and comment as required on matters brought to the Committee 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 Northern Ireland.

- provide Ofcom with advice on matters relating to its responsibilities for the promotion of media literacy in Northern Ireland
- produce an annual report reflecting issues within the communications sector in Northern Ireland

The Operation of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland

6. The Committee shall be operated so that:

- the Committee will generally consist of up to nine Members at any time
- a quorum for any meeting will consist of five Members
- Members' attendance through telephone or videolink is permissible for the purposes of determining a quorum.
- Where the Chairman of the Committee considers it appropriate decisions may be taken by email.
- the Committee will be chaired by a Member of the Committee, appointed by Ofcom. The Director, Northern Ireland with other colleagues will support the work of the Committee
- the Committee will meet not less than three times and not more than six times a year
- the Member for Northern Ireland of the Content Board, and the Member for Northern Ireland of the Consumer Panel have a standing invitation to attend all meetings of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland. 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 Committee as such and are not bound by any collective decisions
- agendas will be prepared by the Committee Chairman, in discussion with the Director, Northern Ireland, with an invitation to any Member of the Advisory Committee to submit matters for inclusion on the agenda. Such agendas will be published on the Ofcom website in advance of all meetings
- a formal minute will be taken of all Advisory Committee meetings. Once approved by the Chairman of the Committee, a descriptive note of the matters discussed at each Committee meeting will also be published on the Ofcom website
- the minutes of each Advisory Committee meeting will be submitted direct to the full Ofcom Board for noting. Items for the attention of the Content Board, the Consumer Panel or the Ofcom executive will be formally communicated by the Director, Northern Ireland. The Content Board Member for Northern Ireland and the Consumer Panel Member for Northern Ireland may also reflect discussions at the Advisory Committee within the meetings of those bodies.
- the views of the Advisory Committee may also be communicated as appropriate to Ofcom through specific submissions and/or letters from the Committee Chair
- Members of the Committee may be asked for their views and advice by individual Members of the Consumer Panel. Such requests should be copied for

information to the Director, Northern Ireland. Where the Consumer Panel wishes to receive a formal response from the Advisory Committee, requests will be made via the Advisory Committees Coordinator.

7. The Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland will be kept informed of issues and development within Ofcom as a whole either through formal papers prepared and submitted to the Committee in advance or by presentations from Ofcom executives at meetings. It will be open to Members of the Committee, through the Chairman, to request such information on any topic within Ofcom's remit.

Responsibilities of Members of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland

8. Members of the Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland:
 - must not hold any substantial interests in companies regulated by Ofcom. All interests direct or indirect must be declared and will be included in a published register of interests. Members will need the approval of the Committee Chairman to retain such interests while remaining as Members of the Committee
 - will be expected to seek the agreement of *the* Director, Northern Ireland before confirming attendance at any communications sector events. Agreement will only be withheld when attendance might unreasonably compromise Ofcom or the Member concerned
 - may not speak on behalf of Ofcom or make any public statements on behalf of Ofcom. All public communications will be made by the Director, Northern Ireland. Members making public statements on their own account are asked wherever possible to check these in advance with the Director, Northern Ireland, and at all times to make clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity and not on behalf of Ofcom
 - will receive, in addition to a modest remuneration based on 12 days' service a year, all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in attending meetings of the Committee or any other activity specifically authorised by the Director, Northern Ireland. Expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with Ofcom's published expenses policy. In exceptional cases, where individual members of the Committee undertake additional executive duties for Ofcom, a fixed fee will be agreed in advance and out-of-pocket expenses met. Any Committee Member who might wish to contract with Ofcom as a third party for specialist services should go through the usual competitive tendering process.