

# Minutes of the 93rd meeting of the Advisory Committee for England, held at Riverside House and via Teams on 9 October 2025

## Present

Richard Bellamy	Chair
Caroline Gardner	Member
Edleen John	Member
Mauro Mortali	Member
Kavya Sharma	Member
Andrew Squires May	Member

## In attendance

Dekan Apajee	Content Board Member for England (mins 6 - 7 via Teams)
Angela Dean	Ofcom Board Member for England
Robert Hammond	Communications Consumer Panel Member for England
Stephen Darke	Director, England
David Edwards	Governance Manager
Other Ofcom colleagues	

### Introduction

1. Richard Bellamy, in his first meeting as the Chair, welcomed Members and attendees. He took the opportunity to thank Members for their warm welcome and messages of support to him as Chair.

### Declaration of Members' Interests

2. The Chair declared that he was a Member of the First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) in South-West England and Wales. He also flagged that in September he had attended the 2025 Connected Britain conference as an employee of Daintta Ltd.

### Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025 and matters arising – Minutes 92(23)

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025 were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair as an accurate record. There were no outstanding actions.

### Ofcom Board update

4. Angela Dean highlighted some recent topics discussed by the Board (minutes and notes of meetings being available on the Ofcom website). Since the last Committee meeting, the Board had met three times, in June, July and September and Board members had taken part in a workshop to discuss Ofcom's Online Safety (OS) communications strategy.

5. Issues discussed by the Board had included Ofcom's estate's strategy and out of London presence; the Public Service Media Review (PSMR), which had been well-received externally; compliance with age assurance requirements to protect children from harmful online content; use of VPNs; and Ofcom's approach to OS enforcement.

The Committee noted that the High Court had dismissed a judicial review of the government's categorisation regulations made by the Secretary of State.

#### **Content Board update**

6. Members noted recent topics discussed by the Content Board (minutes being available on the Ofcom website). The Content Board had met twice since the last Committee meeting, in July and September, and at its recent meeting had discussed issues including the PSMR, Ofcom's annual report and periodic review of the BBC, to be published shortly; prominence requirements under the Media Act Part 2; and review of Rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code.

7. Members noted that this was the last Committee meeting for Dekan Apajee. He had attended meetings in his capacity as the Content Board's member for England. Members noted that Yolisa Phahle would replace Dekan in that role. The Chair thanked Dekan for his past contribution to the work of the Committee.

#### **Consumer Panel update – ACE 12(25)**

8. Robert Hammond reported on recent CCP activity and current priorities (minutes of meetings being available on the Panel's website). Robert flagged that the Panel had met with Royal Mail to discuss the Postal USO, QoS and a proposed RM stakeholder forum (the Panel would take part); and busy stakeholder engagement over the summer period with various organisations. VoIP migration, the Shared Rural Network to increase 4G mobile coverage, 2G/3G switch-off and scams remained areas of Panel focus. OS was a new work area and the Panel had discussed its 'plan of action' in this space.

9. In relation to VoIP, the Panel had welcomed the National Telecare Communications Campaign, launched in June to raise awareness and including a TV advert broadcast several times over the holiday period. Although a positive step, the Panel felt that there was more that still needed to be done. The Committee noted the forthcoming publication of a Panel qualitative research study on the consumer impact of temporary network outages.

#### **Public Policy update – ACE 13(25)**

10. A range of issues were flagged by the Executive. These included the recent UK government reshuffle, ministerial changes including a new DSIT Secretary of State; the annual political party conference season, currently in progress and with Ofcom maintaining a watching brief on matters in its remit; Members noted that Ofcom's Chief Executive would shortly be giving evidence to the House of Lords Digital and Communication Committee on OS; and in July the Government began consulting on its [Proposed Statement of Strategic Priorities \(SSP\) for telecommunications, the management of radio spectrum, and postal services](#).

#### **Connected Nations 2025 – ACE 14(25)**

11. Members noted the Executive's approach for this year's Connected Nations report. A main report and four separate reports for each nation, each with a similar structure, were due to be published in November. An interactive dashboard with more granular data and open data files on fixed and mobile coverage would also be available.

12. Issues raised in discussion included actual *versus* theoretical mobile network capacity; availability of coverage data by postcode area; benchmarking with previous years' data; international comparisons; availability of data related to smart cities and the Internet of Things; value in cutting England data by region; the targeting of potential audiences for this year's report beyond policymakers, the Committee suggesting consumers and citizens experiencing poor coverage and connectivity with an obvious interest in plans for improvements; and the availability and cost of Starlink satellite connectivity.

#### **Mobile Connectivity Programme – ACE 15(25)**

13. Members noted Ofcom's proposed approach for a new strategy to promote investment in mobile connectivity and to provide better quality services, with a focus on three main themes: how Ofcom could help customers drive improved quality; steps to improve quality where competition may not be sufficient, such as on trains, remote/rural areas or high-congestion areas like city centres; and whether other issues needed to be addressed to support investment in quality. Ofcom would also commission related market research as part of this work.

14. Issues discussed included customer motivations when switching mobile provider, including the appeal of add-ons and promotions; information available to customers and whether it was meaningful and in accessible formats; how to define quality; the resilience of networks, power outages affecting mobile base stations and costs for MNOs; potential for investment by device manufacturers and via connected cities; and a need for creative solutions, not just regulation.

#### **Future Wireless Strategy – ACE 16(25)**

15. The Committee received an overview of Ofcom's strategy for the future of wireless connectivity. The project had considered five key areas: how the sector would evolve; a 10-year vision; gaps between today's sector and that vision; tools to address gaps; and how to set Ofcom up for success in this area.

16. The Executive explained that for end-users desired outcomes were consistent, reliable services that provide appropriate security and resilience and deliver value and flexibility whilst reducing 'friction' from connectivity (an example of friction being complex switching processes). Actions identified for industry were: investment to deliver the infrastructure to secure end-user outcomes, with collaboration where appropriate, supported by transparent and user-focussed communications and tangible goals to support economic growth. The project had also identified relevant regulatory levers.

17. Issues discussed by the Committee included cybersecurity and resilience; connectivity on water, trains and in the air; differing value and flexibility that end-users ascribed to the features of their particular mobile contracts; and the importance for consumers of cost, reliability and speed of services.

#### **Media Act programme update – ACE 17(25)**

18. Members received an update on implementation of the Media Act 2024 over the previous six months, including some of the main themes from consultations and statements and recent stakeholder engagement. Implementation involved updating existing regulation of the PSBs and commercial radio sectors to bring them in line with audience expectations and tech developments (Parts 1a, 1b, 3 and 5); and preparing for

duties related to regulated environments such as voice assistants, VoD providers and the availability of PSB content on connected TVs (Parts 2, 4 and 6). Further consultations would be published over the next six months.

19. Members and the Executive discussed the potential for future PSB content, e.g. regional programming like the BBC's Look North, to become available online-only; the requirement in Part 5 of the Media Act for "locally-gathered" news on local analogue commercial radio, raising questions about how this would be defined, monitored and enforced; and whether there were shared and similar concerns across the nations to safeguard local output. Members noted that the agenda of the next Committee meeting would include an item on Part 5 of the Act.

#### **Plan of Work 2026/27 – ACE 18(25)**

20. The Committee was briefed on Ofcom's Plan of Work (PoW) process for the coming financial year 2026/27. The Executive was in the early stages of developing this with Ofcom teams and seeking early input and guidance from the Advisory Committees on the priority areas of work. Those priorities were: internet and post we can rely on; media we trust and value; a safer life online; and enabling wireless in the UK economy.

21. The Committee agreed that these were the right priorities and flagged some issues for consideration. These included the (un)reliability of postal deliveries; perceptions of media trust and value and the importance of local news; reliability and resilience of telecoms networks; a need to treat customers fairly, a review of 'fairness for customers commitments' could be timely, developed some years ago by Ofcom and signed up to by the UK's biggest broadband, phone and pay TV companies; when thinking about the UK's remote and rural areas, many of these were in England; England had the biggest cities and could also mean mobile network capacity issues; whilst smart phones and tablets could be distractions from family life they also provided many positive benefits, e.g. in education; young people were increasingly becoming not just digital but GenAI natives; and a need for AI literacy and guardrails, e.g. to address scams.

22. As an annual PoW item at Committee meetings, this time next year discussion could also include reporting on progress of the current PoW (what had been done, progress made).

#### **Members' open session and future agendas**

23. In the context of AI literacy (raised earlier), it was noted that, at its meeting the previous week, the Advisory Committee for Wales had discussed Ofcom's strategic approach to AI. It was suggested that the England Committee have a similar discussion at a future meeting that could also cover issues related to AI data centres.

24. The next Committee meeting would be held at the University of Leeds and contact would be renewed with the office of the Mayor of West Yorkshire to arrange a discussion with the Mayor (diary permitting) about communications issues of mutual interest.

#### **Information items**

25. Broadcast, Postal and Telecoms complaints data (England) – ACE 19(25): The paper was noted and Members were invited to provide further feedback (by email).

**Any Other Business**

26. Caroline Gardner gave apologies for the next meeting. There was no other business.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

27. The next scheduled Committee meeting would be held on 25 November 2025.