

# Minutes of the 94th meeting of the Advisory Committee for England, held at the University of Leeds and via Teams on 25 November 2025

## Present

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

## In attendance

Angela Dean	Ofcom Board Member for England (mins 1-13)
Robert Hammond	Communications Consumer Panel Member for England
Yolisa Phahle	Content Board Member for England
Stephen Darke	Director, England
David Edwards	Governance Manager
Colleagues from Channel 4 (mins 4 - 6)	
Other Ofcom colleagues	

### Introduction

1. Richard Bellamy welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting held at the University of Leeds, in particular Yolisa Phahle who was attending her first meeting as an observer from Ofcom's Content Board. Apologies had been received from Caroline Gardner.

### Declaration of Members' Interests

2. Edleen John reported that in October she had participated in a Black History Month panel hosted by Openreach.

### Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 and matters arising – Minutes 93(25)

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 were **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair as an accurate record. There were no outstanding actions.

### Channel 4

4. The Chair thanked Channel 4 for arranging a visit to ITN's Channel 4 News studio earlier in the morning. It provided an opportunity to learn first-hand about the news operation in Leeds, some gathered locally, an emphasis on data-led stories and driving an uptick in northern audiences.

5. As part of its annual discussion with the Committee, Channel 4 reported on its activity in England, its presence in Leeds cited as a sign of a commitment to the regions, with metrics on revenues, streaming, spend on commissions, investment in both the North and South of England and expansion of the 4Schools programme. The Committee was briefed in more detail on commissioning and a drive for authentic regional representation, on 4Skills and efforts to support talent and independent production.

6. It was noted that activity extended beyond Channel 4's main hubs (Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol and London) including places like the Midlands and wider relationships with indies in other locations. Topics discussed included audience research to inform commissioning; issues of diversity and inclusion and its importance at senior levels of decision making; out-of-London targets on spend and programme hours; and in-house production plans (in September Channel 4 had acquired Scottish indie Firecrest Films through its newly launched Creative Investment Fund).

#### **Ofcom Board update**

7. 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 twice, in October, which coincided with the Board's annual strategy day and a focus on AI, and in November, when the meeting was held in Edinburgh and the Board visited the National Robotarium at Heriot-Watt University and held a stakeholder reception. The meeting agenda in Edinburgh included a Scotland update and discussion of issues including network outages affecting island communities and resilience; telecoms security; and Ofcom's 2025 online safety report, due for publication shortly.

#### **Content Board update**

8. The Committee noted that the Content Board had not met formally since the last Committee meeting. In the interval its members had taken part in discussions with Ofcom colleagues working on a review of VOD providers' audience protection measures, to be published shortly, and on STV licence changes proposed by the broadcaster.

9. The Committee noted recent high-level resignations at the BBC; media reports about potential merger of ITV's broadcasting business with Sky; and that US media company Paramount had recently acquired the rights to show Champions League matches in the UK from 2027.

#### **Consumer Panel update – ACE 20(25)**

10. 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 was considering bringing its four nations hubs together in the New Year for an all-UK session on Online Safety; in relation to Post, the Panel would take part in the first Royal Mail stakeholder forum and respond to Ofcom's latest call for input (see item later in the meeting); affordability and migration to VoIP remained areas of focus; and a Panel qualitative study on the consumer impact of temporary network outages, e.g. as a result of storm damage, would be published shortly.

#### **Media Act Part 5: local news – ACE 22(25)**

11. Members were updated on activity to implement Part 5 of the Media Act 2024. The Act introduced a duty on Ofcom to introduce licence conditions to require regular broadcast of local news and information on local FM and AM commercial radio, including 'locally-gathered' news. Ofcom had consulted recently on proposals, including draft guidance, and held discussions with stakeholders. Summary responses were shared with the Committee. Most stakeholders had broadly agreed with the proposals but concerns

were raised by stations not currently subject to local news requirements, the majority based in England and cost being an issue for them.

12. Issues raised in discussion by Members included how exceptions would be applied, relating to licensee turnover and financial sustainability; the meaning of local information and locally-gathered, the latter defined in the Act; availability of local news more broadly, including on TV and referenced earlier in relation to Channel 4 News and online. The Committee could return to this discussion in 2026, following the publication of Ofcom's statement.

#### **Public Policy update – ACE 21(25)**

13. The Committee noted that Ofcom had appointed a new Director of Public Policy, effective from the end of January 2026. A range of issues were flagged in the update and these included the Government's [Regulatory Action Plan](#); a recent exchange of letters with the DSIT SoS about O2's recent above inflation in-contract price rises; and the recent review of rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code.

#### **Public Service Media Review – next steps – ACE 23(25)**

14. Members were updated on next steps following the PSM review, on prominence for PSB news, children's content on YouTube and review of broadcast regulation (the current regime having been designed for a linear world). Regarding review of broadcast regulation, Ofcom had recently published a call for input which would close in January.

15. Topics discussed included ensuring good quality content for children in a safe online space; how to facilitate cooperation between the PSBs and leading video sharing platforms like YouTube; whether PSBs were boosting the revenues of commercially-based providers of content; a priority to ensure that audiences can find PSB content; whether growing PSB news viewing via services like YouTube with its international audiences could lead PSBs to focus more on international news at the expense of local stories; and content standards rules on advertising (enforced by the ASA but out of scope of the review of broadcast regulation).

#### **Post Pricing and Affordability Review – ACE 24(25)**

16. Ofcom had published a call for input on post pricing and affordability, due to close on 5 December, and to feed into a consultation at the end of FY Q4 2026. The Committee was briefed on relevant background and thinking related to affordability of universal postal services; the outcome of previous reviews; a targeted discount scheme; on broader pricing concerns and quality of service.

17. Issues discussed included the scope and design elements of a discount scheme and whether it should go beyond First Class and Second Class letter services; qualitative consumer research commissioned by Ofcom, how representative its sample was of the population and whether further research was required; a need to ensure consumer awareness of any future postal discounts; the need to balance our regulatory duties of ensuring affordability and the sustainability of a universal postal service; and the quality of existing services impacting take-up of Royal Mail products and services.

18. Concern was expressed about postal users close to but not qualifying for state benefits, e.g. universal credit, and potentially missing out on a targeted discount scheme.

The Chair suggested that with the CCP planning to respond to the CFI, the Committee could endorse the response.

19. A follow up note was sent to the project team, requesting that they attend a future meeting once the consultation is published.

**Members’ open session and future agendas**

20. The Chair had made contact with the Ofcom’s other nation Advisory Committees. The chair of the Scotland Committee had expressed interest in observing an ACE meeting and Richard Bellamy interest in observing an ACS meeting.

21. A date would be set shortly for a January ACE 2026 agendas planning discussion. A member offered to help facilitate a visit to Sabras Radio, a commercial station based in Leicester, that could coincide with a future Committee meeting in the East Midlands.

**Information items**

22. Broadcast, Postal and Telecoms complaints data (England) – ACE 25(25): The paper was noted.

**Any Other Business**

23. There was no other business.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

24. The next scheduled Committee meeting would be held on 25 February 2026.