

Ofcom Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People

Consultation Response

Second consultation on assessment of future mobile competition and proposals for the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum and related issues

The Ofcom Advisory Committee for Older and Disabled People (ACOD) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's second consultation on the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum.

ACOD broadly welcomes the direction of travel represented by the revised consultation document. In particular, we welcome the request by Ofcom for views on an option for a requirement of '*coverage of areas within which 95% of the population of each nation lives*'. We strongly urge that it should be so adopted. It is essential that the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum is framed so that the maximum number of people possible have 4G coverage.

Older and disabled people are increasingly using mobile devices as links to both ensure that they do not become isolated and so that they can continue to play a full and necessary role in wider society. Many live in rural areas where existing coverage is poor. New ways to engage with society and to communicate, such as 4G, can be useful tools for ensuring that older and disabled people play a full role in their communities.

ACOD supports the proposal in the revised consultation paper to include a more extensive coverage obligation of 98% of the UK population on at least one of the 800 MHz licences; we would welcome the introduction of this target to more than one licensee in each area to ensure that there is sufficient competition and older and disabled people's interests are protected.

ACOD welcomes the UK Government's Mobile Infrastructure Project. Older and disabled people are relying more and more on new technologies to remain connected. It would be a wasted opportunity if older and disabled people were to be disenfranchised from the opportunities that improved mobile infrastructure and the 4G internet will bring.

In summary, ACOD believes that the highest possible coverage provisions should be mandated by Ofcom, these should include provision to ensure that rural areas are not disenfranchised from new technologies such as 4G. Having 4G coverage could be of great benefit to many disabled and elderly people especially with telecare and telecare initiatives progressing to real alternatives to

traditional health interactions. It would be a great injustice if the money the government is investing in mobile infrastructure and the advent of 4G technology did not enfranchise the largest proportion of people possible

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Chair ACOD

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