

4G/TV Co-existence Oversight Board Meeting

Chair's report to Ministers and Ofcom

Meeting date: 16 December 2014

Attendees

David Hendon, Chair

Ian Dewhurst (DCMS)

Paul Rosbotham (Vodafone)

Sue Ramroop (DCMS)

Robin Vernon (O2)

Michelle Brownrigg (DUK)

Mark Falcon (Three)

Andrew Dumbreck (Technical Advisor)

Alan Boyle (BBC)

Peter Couch (Arqiva)

Apologies

William Webb (Non-Executive)

Phil Sheppard (Three)

Roger Darlington (Non-Executive)

Inge Hansen (EE)

Nick Munn (DCMS)

Khalid Hayat (ITV)

Ben Roome (DMSL)

Kevin Burrows (Channel 4)

Mark Caines (Ofcom)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 There were 4066 confirmed cases of 4G interference at 800MHz as of the end of November, excluding the 35 cases during the pilots. The position remains lower than expected.
- 1.2 All trial KPI targets were met in November. All 348 confirmed 4G interference cases were resolved within the 10 working day target.
- 1.3 The reminder mailing trial to test modified processes to narrow the time between a viewer receiving a postcard and a nearby mast activating has been postponed to the end of January 2015. at800 will keep the Board updated on progress and provide a full report when the operation has been tested for an adequate period. The Board will consider the recommendations of the Policy sub-group, who will be reconvened to review the trial once it has concluded.

2. at800 update

Roll-out

- 2.1 As of the end of November, there were 4,066 confirmed cases of DTT interference caused by 4G at 800MHz, excluding the 35 cases found within the pilots.

Mast Analysis

- 2.2 The cumulative cases of interference reported within 28 days of mast activation for 1.5km has slightly increased from 0.29 (October) to 0.30 (November) whilst the number of cases within 900m have remained static, since August, at 0.20. There was an increase in the monthly cases in November (from October) for 1.5km from 0.18 to 0.32 and for 900m, 0.10 to 0.26.
- 2.3 The rolling average of confirmed cases per activated mast across a 3-month period decreased in the three months to November to 1.42 (from 1.57 in October) whilst there was a small increase in the total cumulative number of cases per mast from 0.92 to 0.93.

Installer Scheme and Audit Summary

- 2.4 To date, there have been 13,870 installer appointments, including repeat visits, of which 1,065 have been subject to audit. In November, there were 851 installer visits with 176 of those solely to households with vulnerable people.
- 2.5 There were 50 audits completed in November of installer visits originally undertaken in September (11), October (35) and November (4). From these audits, there was one confirmed 4G case overturned from October and one confirmed non-4G case overturned from November. These exclude 12 other potential overturns (9 confirmed 4G to non-4G and 3 non-4G to confirmed 4G) that through the additional measures in place were discounted due to form completion errors.
- 2.6 To support the improvements to assist installers to correctly identify and record the cause of reported interference, members of the Coexistence Technical Working Group (CTWG) will be attending a bespoke version of the in-home measurement and diagnosis training undertaken by the at800-accredited installers in January 2015.
- 2.7 The objectives are to understand the training provided with an expectation to be able to advise at800 and/or provide recommendations on enhancing the existing course to assist the installers in making correct diagnoses whilst improving the quality of data collected to benefit prediction modelling and potentially, future spectrum management programmes (e.g. 700MHz clearance).
- 2.8 Also as part of this continuous improvement plan, at800 are conducting a review of the installer booking process with the intention to enhance the overall efficiency of the end-to-end viewer experience, assisting with reducing the number of cancellations and/or missed installer appointments amongst other benefits.

Special mailings

- 2.9 As outlined in last month's Board Report, at800 conducted a special mailing exercise in early November to rectify an administrative error that resulted in a number of households not being notified of planned mast activations before they occurred.
- 2.10 In their update to the Board, at800 confirmed that of the 15,492 households within the special mailing exercise, there were 9 cases of confirmed 4G interference, 7 non-4G cases and 1 case pending an outcome either way. The Board acknowledged the low numbers of households affected.

Outreach

- 2.11 As previously reported in August (2014), at800 works with Digital Outreach Limited (DOL) in ensuring vulnerable viewers are aware of the mitigation assistance available and availability of a chaperone to accompany visits from at800-accredited installers.
- 2.12 at800 and DOL are currently collaborating on a new operational approach for timelier mailing despatch and activities within the voluntary sector to raise awareness. Roger Darlington, the Board's non-exec consumer expert, will be engaged on this work, which is due for implementation from April 2015.

Communications

- 2.13 at800 have drafted a paper on the effective use of social media within its traditional media relations work, which includes amongst many activities, targeted communications to local press and identified 'influencers' such as community leaders or housing bodies to raise awareness of the mitigation scheme and its purpose.
- 2.14 As a demonstration of the potential scope using social media, I note that as part of at800's public affairs outreach in November, they emailed MPs whose constituencies had recently been sent postcards to advise them of recent at800 activity; two of the MPs used Twitter and blogs to re-tweet and update their followers, reaching over 300 individuals who potentially may not have been aware of the mitigation scheme and at800 and still would not have been without this contact.
- 2.15 at800's social media paper on their experiences and lessons learnt, including a real-life case study, will be shared with the Board before publication on their website.

Complaints

- 2.16 The number of recorded complaints increased from 24 in October to 57 in November. at800 believe that this rise was primarily caused by two factors: a clearer process in relation to communal properties with free installer support only being provided where a landlord or managing agent is not clearly identifiable to arrange and pay for mitigation and secondly, better clarification during contact centre triage of viewers with access to non-Freeview services (i.e. satellite and cable) to whom at800 does not provide support; however at800 does provide a free indoor filter (or multiple filters if required) to these households which viewers are able to fit themselves.
- 2.17 Of the 57 complaints received in November, 12 complaints were regarding the diagnostics provided by the contact centre (triage), 10 regarding the communal process and 5 were installer related (non-specific) with the remaining 30 spread through issues including requests for compensation (16) and the roll-out in general (6). In comparison, in October there were 4 complaints about triage, 3 on the communal process and 1 installer-related. The number of requests for compensation was similar with 13.

General

- 2.18 at800 summarised the general position for the operation in the lead up to and during the holiday period.
- 2.19 In conjunction with the mast activation plans provided by the mobile network operators and to avoid postal service backlogs over the Christmas period, all pre-activation postcard mailings for 2014 have been sent; the next mailing exercise is due in the second week of January 2015.
- 2.20 Whilst the contact centre will be resourced appropriately during the festive season except for the public holidays of Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day when the centre will be closed, there will not be any installer visits booked for the afternoon of Christmas Eve. This is to avoid causing any further potential disruption to a viewer's television service that may result in the loss of signal and so spoil their viewing experience over the festive period. Installer visits will be undertaken as usual in the morning and resume on the next working day.

3. Interference experience in Europe

- 3.1 at800 recently met with a French mobile network operator to explain how the UK mitigation assistance scheme operates and used this as an opportunity to gather

information about the interference experiences within Europe to inform wider understanding of the issue.

- 3.2 In France, the current number of cases of interference per mast is approximately 10-12; in the UK, the number of cases per mast is currently at less than 1 (0.93). However, it is not clear why this disparity in volume of 4G interference at 800MHz exists. A number of factors, including the difference in how the mitigation assistance scheme is operated in France; the varied influence of local community leaders; their limited understanding of national DTT coverage and signal strength; the propensity to higher population density in rural areas than the UK; and base station power levels were cited as potential reasons.
- 3.3 It is interesting to note that it is required that French operators activate their masts at full power for a minimum of two weeks to 'flush' out interference in the local area. To enable a comparison, the Board consider it useful to understand the initial activation approach the UK mobile operators adopt. One board member said that their practice was indeed to operate the base station at its maximum power (which may be less than the maximum licensed power though) for a few days when initially switched on.
- 3.4 at800 is due to meet with a mobile network operator in Spain and will share their findings with the Board, who remain keen in their awareness and understanding of the European experience.

4. KPI Report

- 4.1 at800 reported passes against all KPIs with no exceptions. This included a 100% pass rate for KPIA for service restoration within 10 working days where a household is a primary DTT user; all 348 confirmed 4G interference cases in November were resolved within the target.

5. Reminder Mailings

- 5.1 The reminder mailing trial to test modified processes to narrow the time between a viewer receiving a postcard and a nearby mast activating has been postponed until the end of January 2015. The primary aim of the change to the mailing operation is to reduce the likelihood of unreported interference.

- 5.2 at800 will keep the Board updated during the trial and provide a full report once the changes have been tested for an adequate period of time; this is likely to be one to two months after the trial has begun and the Board will confirm the exact period once the trial has begun.
- 5.3 The Board will consider the recommendations of the Policy sub-group, who will be reconvened to review the trial once it has concluded.

6. Coexistence Technical Working Group (CTWG)

- 6.1 Andrew Dumbreck reported on the CTWG work on improving the computer modelling of interference. Recent work has focussed on household aerial sensitivity. The unrepresentative sensitivity figures used in the original modelling are considered to be a major factor in the over-prediction of interference. New figures have now been agreed by the CTWG and passed to at800 for trial use. at800 will test the impact of the new figures on the numbers of households that would be sent mailings and on the accuracy of new predictions against known interference cases.
- 6.2 The CTWG will present the results and their proposals on the possible modelling changes and impacts to the Board for consideration, who may decide to reconvene the Policy sub-group to review the proposals on its behalf before making any recommendations to Ofcom.

7. AOB & Next Meeting

- 7.1 Mark Falcon (Three) has been appointed as the Head of Regulatory Strategy and Policy at the Payment Systems Regulator. I thanked Mark for his contributions to the Oversight Board and congratulated him on his new role.
- 7.2 The Board agreed a formal recommendation to Ofcom to seek approval to extend the period of the current trial KPI regime and suspension of the provision of proactive filters (with the provision of reactive filters instead) beyond the end of the year and for consideration of a rolling period thereafter. The Board will continue to review and advise Ofcom of at800's performance.
- 7.3 The Board agreed that the frequency of the meetings should be reviewed on a monthly basis with the intention to meet at least every other month unless there is a need for discussions in the intervening month(s). at800 will provide their monthly update papers and a Board report will be produced as routine.

7.4 The next scheduled meeting is on Thursday 22 January 2015. I have agreed with the Board that we may cancel this meeting unless there is a need to meet and will take a decision on that closer to the date.

David Hendon

Chair

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