

Review of the Market for Standalone Landline Telephone Services

Consultation response from Rebecca Ellen

Question 3.1: Do you agree with our provisional conclusion that there is a separate market for Standalone Fixed Voice residential access which includes both voice-only and split purchase consumers? Please provide reasons and evidence in support of your views.:

Yes. While many people have broadband through landline, it is not possible for all landlines to provide the broadband service. E.g. I live 40 minutes from Glasgow but for the last year BT have utterly failed to provide any reliable or consistent broadband service through the landline due to a decrepit copper wire infrastructure. Therefore although a landline **could** be used for broadband, it is not always possible and broadband must be obtained by another method such as satellite/4G wifi tablet. This applies to users of any age or demographic. In addition, some landline users do not use broadband at all, e.g. the elderly, but still require access to a landline in event of emergency or because they get no mobile reception at their home.

Question 3.2: Do you agree with our provisional conclusion that there is a separate market for Standalone Fixed Voice residential calls? Please provide reasons and evidence in support of your views.:

Answer as above: Yes. While many people have broadband through landline, it is not possible for all landlines to provide the broadband service. E.g. I live 40 minutes from Glasgow but for the last year BT have utterly failed to provide any reliable or consistent broadband service through the landline due to a decrepit copper wire infrastructure. Therefore although a landline **could** be used for broadband, it is not always possible and broadband must be obtained by another method such as satellite/4G wifi tablet. This applies to users of any age or demographic. In addition, some landline users do not use broadband at all, e.g. the elderly, but still require access to a landline in event of emergency or because they get no mobile reception at their home.

Question 4.1: Do you agree with our provisional conclusion that, during the period covered by this market review, BT will have SMP in the SFV access market? Please provide reasons and evidence in support of your views.:

It would be helpful to provide description of acronyms used in questions. Yes, BT have absolute market power when it comes to line rental. They are obliged by the government to provide line rental. Therefore their market power is not significant but ABSOLUTE. Because they remain intrinsically linked to Openreach, the provision of line rental is via Openreach infrastructure and for people who live remotely (even where 'remote' is 40 minutes from Glasgow, but on village backroads) then it can be an administrative comfort to use BT as the service provider given their connection with Openreach should issues develop.

Question 5.1: Do you agree with our provisional conclusion that, during the period covered by this market review, BT will have SMP in the SFV calls market? Please provide reasons and evidence in support of your views.:

Yes - answer as for 4.1: It would be helpful to provide description of acronyms used in questions. Yes, BT have absolute market power when it comes to line rental. They are obliged by the government to provide line rental. Therefore their market power is not significant but ABSOLUTE. Because they remain intrinsically linked to Openreach, the provision of line rental is via Openreach infrastructure and for people who live remotely (even where 'remote' is 40 minutes from Glasgow,

but on village backroads) then it can be an administrative comfort to use BT as the service provider given their connection with Openreach should issues develop.

Question 7.1: Do you agree with the need to trial and test engagement remedies before implementation? Please explain your reasons for this.:

No. The engagement remedies are designed to encourage competition. For reasons explained in earlier question answers (the connection between Openreach and BT), I do not consider that engagement remedies are likely to make any difference to people who feel bound by their location to use BT as the line provider because any problems will ultimately be addressed by Openreach.

Question 7.2: Do you agree that remedies focussed on improving consumer communications to increase engagement listed below offer a reasonable prospect of success in encouraging competition?

- ***information on savings;***
- ***information on the switching process;***
- ***introduction of a decision point; and***
- ***remedies to facilitate response to this information.***

Please explain your reasons.:

For those who do not feel bound by their location restrictions to only use BT given connection with Openreach (e.g. rural locations with long lines and infrastructure issues), then promoting choice and information is positive.

Question 7.3: Do you agree with our conclusions that the other remedial options we have considered, namely the establishment of a customer database for marketing purposes and automatic switching within BT's tariffs, raise significant implementation risks and therefore do not warrant further consideration? If you do not agree or consider there are other options we should have considered, please provide your reasons.:

I think people should be able to read and understand the small print of agreements and you shouldn't 'nanny' people by assuming they cannot make an informed decision.

Question 8.1: Do you agree with our approach to determining the options for the level of price controls for SFV services? If not, please give your reasons.:

I think BT's complexity is doing them a favour as you are not considering all factors. BT are the winners in this market - if you were considering the charge imposed by other providers would you have approach the price control calculations in the same way?

Question 8.2: Do you agree with our proposed basket structure if implementing a price control for SFV services? In particular, do you agree with the need for a separate sub-cap on the Line Rental within the basket? If not, please give your reasons.:

I think line rental should always be treated separately. It has a separate government requirement after all - there is a requirement by law to provide access to line rental. There is no requirement by law (yet) to provide decent broadband. Therefore yes, I think line rental should have its own sub-cap but this should not be determined by whether or not a customer also uses BT for broadband or other services. You draw a distinction between normal users and those who make very few calls - please also remember that some people only keep a landline as absolute emergency and never make any calls on it.

Question 8.3: Do you agree that it would be appropriate to allow the prices in a price control basket to rise by up to CPI? If not, please give your reasons.:

I think the line rental increase should only be permitted in line with the cost of Openreach engineer salaries and access. After all, the only reason the line rental should increase is because BT have had to upgrade their infrastructure to keep the line viable and that is the domain of Openreach.

Question 8.4: Do you agree that we should exclude Home Phone Saver and Line Rental Plus from the price control? If not, please give your reasons.:

No I don't agree - if you do this you are endorsing BT's commercial packages. Line rental is line rental.

Question 8.5: Do you agree that it is appropriate for the Line Rental sub-cap to have greater price flexibility than the overall price cap to allow BT to rebalance pricing between the line rental and call prices? If not, please give your reasons.:

No - call prices reflect individual choice on when and where they make calls. Line rental is a government requirement and something that cannot be selected by the consumer (other than simply not to have a landline at all).

Question 8.6: Do you agree with the services we are proposing to include in a price control remedy basket for SFV services? If not, please set out your alternative proposals and please give your reasons.:

Yes I agree.

Question 9.1: Do you agree with our proposed set of remedies for the SFV services markets, that is a price control, with a one-off adjustment set with reference to the costs of BT competitors in this market, and an obligation on BT to work with us to explore and ultimately implement information options to promote competition? If not please set out your reasons.:

Broadly yes. However please do not allow BT to generalise their customer base - e.g. users connected to one telephone exchange experience multiple different requirements/use/service. For example you may have users on a main street close to an exchange with a reliable line; connected to the same exchange are users on very long lines where the copper infrastructure is failing and weather results in a loss of reliable landline. Therefore discourage generalisation by BT and don't assume that an exchange close to a city has no problems.

Question 9.2: Do you agree that BT should have at least one month after the date of the statement to implement the new price structure? If not, please set out your reasons.:

Yes.

Question 9.3: Do you have any additional comments on our analysis or conclusions in this consultation?:

Don't fall into the trap of assuming that those who only use a landline are those who specifically choose not to use other services like broadband. Circumstances are such that sometimes broadband is not available via landline, and this can happen much closer to urban centres than you might think (i.e. in Glasgow, not just in the Outer Hebrides!!). Don't generalise the user demographic you are trying to help and thus may inadvertently exclude other users from the aim of your consultation.