

Additional comments:

Question 1: Do you agree with the consumer harm identified from Communications Providers? ability to raise prices in fixed term contracts without the automatic right to terminate without penalty on the part of consumers?:

Yes

Question 2: Should consumers share the risk of Communications Providers? costs increasing or should Communications Providers bear that risk because they are better placed to assess the risks and take steps to mitigate them?:

CPs are better able to understand future costs, however, if there are changes then new contracts must not be allowed to increase prices at the start of the contract, rather than part way through.

I have in mind the increases on UK to UK calls when calls made from mainland Europe were regulated. UK only callers had to cover the reductions in profits from EU calls reduction in profits.

Question 3: Do you agree with the consumer harm identified from Communications Providers? inconsistent application of the ?material detriment? test in GC9.6 and the uncertainties associated with the UTCCRs?:

Yes

Question 4: Should Communications Providers be allowed (in the first instance) to unilaterally determine what constitutes material detriment or should Ofcom provide guidance?:

Ofcom controlled.

Question 5: What are your views on whether guidance would provide an adequate remedy for the consumer harm identified? Do you have a view as to how guidance could remedy the harm?:

No

Question 6: Do you agree with the consumer harm identified from the lack of transparency of price variation terms?:

Yes

Question 7: Do you agree that transparency alone would not provide adequate protection for consumers against the harm caused by price rises in fixed term contracts?:

Yes

Question 8: Do you agree that any regulatory intervention should protect consumers in respect of any increase in the price for services provided under a contract applicable at the time that contract is entered into by the consumer?

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Yes

Question 9: Do you agree that any regulatory intervention should apply to price increases in relation to all services or do you think that there are particular services which should be treated differently, for example, increases to the service charge for calls to non-geographical numbers?:

There should be full control over prices by Ofcom. As an example, 0800 numbers are known by the public at large as free. But many do not realise that freephone numbers they make are charged if they use their cellphone.

FREE should be Free on all networks and not just BT.

As an extra comment: all companies using any 08 number, should be required to also provide an 01, 02 or 03 number beside any 08 number they provide to the public.

Question 10: Do you agree that the harm identified from price rises in fixed term contracts applies to small business customers (as well as residential customers) but not larger businesses?:

No

Question 11: Do you agree that any regulatory intervention that we may take to protect customers from price rises in fixed term contracts should apply to residential and small business customers alike?:

Yes

Question 12: Do you agree that our definition of small business customers in the context of this consultation and any subsequent regulatory intervention should be consistent with the definition in section 52(6) of the Communications Act and in other parts of the General Conditions?:

Yes

Question 13: Do you agree that price rises due to the reasons referred to in paragraph 5.29 are outside a Communications Provider's control or ability to manage and therefore they should not be required to let consumers withdraw from the contract without penalty where price rises are as a result of one of these factors?:

Yes

Question 14: Except for the reasons referred to in paragraph 5.29, are there any other reasons for price increases that you would consider to be fully outside the control of Communications Providers or their ability to manage and therefore should not trigger the obligation on providers to allow consumers to exit the contract without penalty?:

Question 15: Do you agree that Communications Providers are best placed to decide how they can communicate contract variations effectively with its consumers?:

No.

CPs are bad at communicating. They will not provide an e-mail address for the public to use, expecting the public to fill in webforms with full details. This is acceptable for an initial contact, but they then reply by e-mail using an outgoing only address.

If they reply by e-mail, than any response should also be possible by a simple click to replay, rather than having to use the lengthy webform system again.

Question 16: Do you agree with Ofcom?s approach to liaise with providers informally at this stage, where appropriate, with suggestions for better practice where we identify that notifications could be improved?:

Yes

Question 17: What are your views on Ofcom?s additional suggestions for best practice in relation to the notification of contractual variations as set out above? Do you have any further suggestions for best practice in relation to contract variation notifications to consumers?:

Question 18: What are your views on the length of time that consumers should be given to cancel a contract without penalty in order to avoid a price rise? For consistency, should there be a set timescale to apply to all Communications Providers? :

It depends on the consumer's situation. If I am in the UK, then 30 days is generally adequate, but if as a retired person, my European trip is longer (to keep ferry costs down - 1 trip in place of say 2 trips), then to reply from outside the UK is expensive, by cellphone or e-mail. I won't even see any letter posted to my home address!

Question 19: What are your views on whether there should be guidance which sets out the length of time that Communications Providers should allow consumers to exit the contract without penalty to avoid a price rise?:

My answer to Q18 would also apply here.

Question 20: Do you agree that this option to make no changes to the current regulatory framework is not a suitable option in light of the consumer harm identified in section 4 above?:

Yes

Question 21: Do you agree with Ofcom's analysis of option 2? If not, please explain your reasons.:

Yes

Question 22: Do you agree with Ofcom's analysis of option 3? If not, please explain your reasons.:

Yes

Question 23: What are your views on option 4 to modify the General Condition to require Communications Providers to notify consumers of their ability to withdraw from the contract without penalty for any price increases?:

There should not be a system, whereby the consumer does nothing, but pays more. Reasons are similar to Q18 answer above.

Question 24: Do you agree with Ofcom's assessment that option 4 is the most suitable option to address the consumer harm from price rises in fixed term contracts?:

Yes

Question 25: Do you agree that Ofcom's proposed modifications of GC9.6 would give the intended effect to option 4?:

Yes

Question 26: What are your views on the material detriment test in GC9.6 still applying to any non-price variations in the contract?:

I have no view.

Question 27: For our preferred option 4, do you agree that a three month implementation period for Communications Providers would be appropriate to comply with any new arrangements?:

Yes

Question 28: What are your views on any new regulatory requirement only applying to new contracts?:

They should only apply to new contracts as otherwise could be unfair to CPs. However, existing contracts should be regulated on the amount of any increase.