

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 I believe that this is effectively changing the terms of the contract and so the second party should have the option to terminate - failure to keep up with payments that they did not agree to in the first place is a potential scenario that will affect this person financially (and/or otherwise) for potentially a considerable amount of time in the future.

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?:

Communication Providers should bear that risk. As a company, they employ financial advisers who are responsible for predicting such events. If they have been unable to identify these risks and rising costs, and protect the company from them, then that is a penalty that the company should bear. This is through no fault of the consumer that the communication providers' planning and risk-taking has been ineffective: consumers should not be the ones to pay for it through increased prices.

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?:

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

Ofcom should most definitely provide guidance as there needs to be assurance that this has been regulated in a fair, unbiased way with no incentive or material gain for the communication providers being valued higher than universal access and justice for consumers.

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?:

Having a concrete set of rules/guidelines is a positive step in itself towards consumer protection and awareness.

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

Absolutely. Failure to keep up with payments that they did not agree to in the first place is a potential scenario that will affect the consumer financially (and/or otherwise) for potentially a

considerable amount of time in the future. Normally when one party wishes to change the terms of the contract (including agreed monthly payment value), the other party is fully entitled to reject the offer, as the original contract was signed under different terms. Whilst I understand that the price variation must be deemed 'reasonable', this offers no consumer protection. 'Reasonable' is a very subjective term and needs clarification.

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?:

Whilst I understand that the price variation must be deemed 'reasonable', this offers no consumer protection. 'Reasonable' is a very subjective term and needs clarification. Certainly I believe that Communications Providers should have to prove liability on the part of the consumer for financial detriment; such is the case if roles are reversed. A consumer cannot simply inform a Communications Provider that, due to a change in financial circumstance, they will no longer be paying the agreed sum for the Communications Provider's services. Why should it be so that this is acceptable when the roles are reversed. A large company should not be able to bully consumers into paying more than originally agreed due to poor business conduct. It should have to prove that the customer is jointly liable for said financial detriment.

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? :

Yes, they are not the ones amending original payment values.

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?:

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?:

I believe that it applies to all businesses who are engaged in a relevant fixed term contract, whether big or small, but small businesses will be more affected in general as they are less likely to have the capital to withstand a higher budget enforcement.

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?:

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?:

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?:

Yes but this should be made explicit to the consumers, and done in good and reasonable time.

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? :

I believe that all Providers should abide by the same timescale, if not longer. I suggest that 1 month cancellation period post-notification is sufficient.

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?:

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.:

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

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?:

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?:

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

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

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?:

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