

Claudio Pollack
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Thursday, 20th April, 2006
Nothing in this document is confidential.

Dear Claudio Pollack

Ofcom's Consumer Policy

My attention has just been drawn to this document published on 18th February, to which a response was requested on 19th April. I am submitting my response admittedly a day late in the hope that its content is of interest and will be taken into account.

Whilst writing, I would comment that it does seem strange that this document which is of interest to the general public should not have been more widely publicised in the national press and also specifically to those consumers who responded to earlier Ofcom consultations.

I specifically refer to this in my answer to QC.

Question A

Do you agree with our proposed aims for consumer policy?

Yes

Question B

Do you agree that we should publish an annual report on consumer interests?

Yes

Question C

Do you agree with our proposals for improving consumer protection? Is there anything else you think we should be doing?

As far as they go the proposals seem to be very laudable. But will the enforcement be speedy and effective? So far, this has not been seen to be the case. There are moreover, no proposals to end the NGN scam whereby subscribers pay twice for making a call - once through their all-in package and a second time for making the call itself. As with most abuses, it is the vulnerable, ie the elderly and poor, who are most affected. I also believe that you should be consulting not merely interest groups but individuals who have demonstrated an interest in the subject.

Question D

Do you agree with our approach to providing consumer information?

The national press carries a fair amount of information about service providers usually in personal finance columns but this needs to be vetted by Ofcom to ensure that it is not inadvertently misleading.

Question E

What do you think of the Ofcom PASS¹ scheme for comparing information on price information? Do you have any comments on the four options referred to on page 11?

A truly independent evaluation scheme is vital for consumer protection. The fact that the PASS scheme exists is not widely known. Ofcom should either publicise it in the national press or ask the press to include reference to it in future features on telecoms.

Question F

Do you have any comments on our approach to providing information on comparing the quality of services?

No

Question G

Do you think we need to take action to improve consumer awareness of how to switch to a new service provider? If so, how should we do it?

See answers to QD & QE

Yours sincerely,

Fabian Olins,