

Responding to the SMEs Call for Inputs: Benbecula Medical Practice

Title:

Dr

Forename:

Susannah

Surname:

Dawson

Representing:

Organisation

Organisation (if applicable):

Benbecula Medical Practice

Question 1: What are the communications needs of SMEs and how may these differ by: business size, sector and business model, location, other relevant factors?:

SMEs need to communicate rapidly, network, keep in contact with suppliers and customers, maintain websites. High quality and fast response keeps us abreast of requirements. Remote organisations need to maintain access for the public at a very high level to enable people to access services in spite of distance.

Question 2: How do the needs of SMEs for communications services differ from (a) residential consumers and (b) large enterprises?:

SMEs rely on external suppliers, customers, and do not have access to expensive work-rounds. They need to maintain good quality websites. Remote and rural SMEs need skype and other desk-top VC capability to access meetings without wasting time and money on travel. Access to training online is also a major issue.

Question 3: What are the types and degree of network availability issues that affect SMEs, for example issues with specific locations or services and what is the effect of these issues on SMEs? businesses?:

In rural areas, poor mobile coverage, abysmal, patchy and expensive broadband infrastructure have an adverse effect on access to services, suppliers and customers. In theory, the internet

can allow people living remotely to work online in groups elsewhere, videolinking and skypeing to meetings.

Question 4: What opportunities do communications providers see in serving the SME market and how are these evolving as a result of developments in technology and infrastructure?:

We still only have 60-70% coverage of 2G and patchy slow broadband. As technology and infrastructure develop in urban areas, rural areas are left undeveloped. This has an impact on provision of health services,

Question 5: How far does the choice, quality and price of products in the retail market meet the needs of SMEs?:

In rural areas, we have no choice, poor quality and high prices. Satellite broadband is double the price of other providers, and has a lag: great for downloading large files but rubbish for real-time communication.

Question 6: Are there challenges for communications providers in targeting the SME sector, and do these vary by geography, SME size and SME sector?:

Question 7: Are there issues facing retail providers in engaging with wholesale providers in order to offer retail products which meet the needs of SMEs?:

Question 8: How far does the quality of service delivered by communications providers meet the needs of SMEs?:

Question 9: What issues face SMEs in ensuring that they have appropriate SLAs and are able to gain redress when quality of services falls below the standards expected?:

Question 10: What products and service enhancements are available, at what indicative price points, to deliver on SMEs? quality of service needs (e.g. in terms of technical product characteristics or fault resolution)?:

Question 11: What information is available to SMEs to enable them to select communications services appropriate for their business needs? Please identify any additional information or measures which you consider would enhance transparency for SMEs and your reasons for this view?:

Question 12: What factors do SMEs take into account when they are considering changing their communications service or provider? Please identify any that you consider may deter SMEs from switching and your reasons for this view.:

We have only one available provider, so we can't change. They have us over a barrel.

Question 13: What evidence is there of issues where bad practices by communications providers causes harm to SMEs?:

Question 14: Are there any other issues in relation to the provision of communications services to SMEs, or SMEs? experience of these services, which you consider should be included within our assessment?:

Question 15: For any issues identified in response to any of the questions above do you have any views on how they may be resolved?: