

Broadband information consultation  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2A Southwark Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 9HA

Email: [broadbandinformation@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:broadbandinformation@ofcom.org.uk)

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Dear Ofcom,

### **Consultation: Improving broadband information for customers**

I am writing to you on behalf of Open Fibre Networks Limited (OFNL), part of the BUUK Infrastructure Group of companies, in response to the March 2023 Ofcom consultation [Improving broadband information for customers](#). Given the limited number of questions presented in the consultation, we have chosen to provide a general response, highlighting our high-level views on the proposals. I can confirm that our response is not confidential.

### **Introduction to BUUK and OFNL**

BUUK is a multi-utility infrastructure investor that works across GB and competes against incumbent utility companies to provide new utility connections, largely to new housing developments. To date, we have provided over two million utility connections and now serve customers across 30,000 discrete networks and six essential utilities, including gas, electricity, water, wastewater, fibre and heat.

OFNL has been providing gigabit ready full fibre broadband connections to the new build housing sector since 2008 and our fibre networks are often chosen by developers in preference to the solutions offered by the monopoly incumbent. We also operate a wholesale business, Open Fibre Networks (Wholesale) Limited (OFN(W)L), offering wholesale services to Communication Providers across the UK.

### **OFNL views on proposals to improve broadband information for customers**

We very much welcome Ofcom's proposal to introduce revised guidance that will require providers to supply existing and prospective end customers with information regarding the technology underpinning their broadband connection, using one or two consistent terms. We equally support the proposal to supplement this information by making available a longer description of what these terms mean in practice. In addition, we welcome Ofcom's plans to clarify that the terms 'fibre' and 'full fibre' should only be used when referring to fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) networks. We believe that the combination of these measures will help to

establish a clear framework for the provision of sufficient, useful and timely end customer information regarding broadband services; facilitating the clarity they require with respect to competing offers and allowing them to make informed decisions about the products and services that will best meet their needs.

Our experience, working across a range of utility sectors, has given us a good understanding of the challenges that end customers face when seeking to engage on key issues related to the products and services they receive from providers in these markets. We are therefore unsurprised to learn that Ofcom's research discovered that "around 27% of fixed broadband customers were not confident understanding the language and terminology used by providers". We also agree that this is only likely to be exacerbated by inconsistencies in the way providers refer to network technology and recognise that, in these circumstances, it is often vulnerable customers that are most disadvantaged. Indeed, when communications Providers first began selling superfast fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) connections and marketing them to customers as 'fibre', we joined forces with City Fibre to highlight our concerns to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA); unfortunately without success.

We welcome the more recent work that Ofcom has progressed in seeking to ensure the availability of adequate, up-to-date, and comparable information via the 'GC C1' contract requirements, and the 'GC C2' information publication and transparency requirements. We understand that the Ofcom proposals cover point-of-sale / contractual information and do not cover advertising, as this is regulated by the ASA. However, we hope that the ASA will come to recognise the benefit of consistency in regulatory approaches and take steps to mirror the proposals that Ofcom has presented as this will help to ensure that adequate consumer protection is provided across all stages of the customer journey.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely