

The logo for Which? is a red square with the word "Which?" in white, bold, sans-serif font. The question mark is slightly larger and more prominent than the word.

Which?, 2 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 4DF

Date: - 2 October 2013 To: - Liz Hall Response by: - Sumedha Pathak

Consultation Response

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Consumer Switching

About Which?

Which? is the largest consumer organisation in Europe. It is an independent, not-for-profit consumer organisation with almost 800,000 members. Which? is independent of Government and industry, and is funded through the sale of Which? consumer magazines, services and books. Which?'s mission is to make individuals as powerful as the organisations they have to deal with in their daily lives by empowering them to make informed decisions and by campaigning to make people's lives fairer, simpler and safer.

Below we set out some general views of Which?, the Consumers' Association, on the issues raised in Ofcom's consultation on Consumer Switching dated 8 August 2013. This consultation is reviewing the switching processes related to voice and broadband services over the Openreach copper network.

General Comments

We welcome Ofcom's decision to create consistency in the broadband and fixed voice market by making the gaining provider led switching system standard. Switching is an important and necessary feature for consumers to exercise choice and take advantage of competition within a market. In a Which? members survey from May 2012, 28% of members who switched their broadband provider said the process took between one and two weeks and for a further 28% the process took over two weeks. Members told us one of the most common problems causing delays was the difficulty in obtaining migration authorisation codes so we welcome measures that would make it easier and quicker for the gaining provider to obtain the necessary information for the switch to proceed.

We also support Ofcom's proposal to include key information in letters to consumers before their switch takes place to help them understand the implications of their switch and clearly outline any additional costs that might be due in their specific situation, such as early termination fees. This would prevent consumers from being hit by unexpected fees and would

Which? Is a consumer champion

We work to make things better for consumers. Our advice helps them make informed decisions. **Our campaigns make people's lives fairer, simpler and safer.** Our services and products put consumers' needs first to bring them better value.

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also help them understand the impact on other services that may be bundled with their broadband. This is quite useful since currently most bundled contracts are simply a series of contracts sitting side by side with little explanation of how their features interact with each other.

Which? believes it is important that the new gaining provider led switching process is made clear to consumers. Our research shows consumers are confused about the switching process: 34% of respondents to our members' survey who said they were considering switching their broadband service ended up sticking with their current provider out of concern something would go wrong or that it would be too much effort. A further 32% decided not to switch because they thought it would be too difficult.

It is also important that consumers are made aware that they do not need to cancel their service directly with their current provider, which should save them considerable hassle. This should also encourage better competition in offers across the whole market as it will be more difficult for losing providers to retain existing consumers by offering better deals. Currently, competitive offers are reserved for new customers or those who attempt to switch, with existing customers losing out. Our research shows that of those members who considered switching, 12% didn't go through with it due to receiving a better offer from their current provider. To illustrate possible detriment around not switching - our research shows that of all the members who went ahead with a broadband switch, 43% reported receiving faster broadband speeds, and on average members saved £4 per month.

We encourage Ofcom to quickly continue work on the remaining issues necessary to improve the switching experience overall.