

Overview of responses to Ofcom proposals for Openreach reform

- 1.1 In July 2016, we published our proposals for a more independent Openreach, and sought views on our plans. The consultation closed on 4 October 2016 and in total we received 94,122 responses.
- 1.2 We received 90 responses to the consultation from individuals and industry stakeholders, either through the Ofcom website or by direct e-mail. Of these, 23 respondents asked for their responses to remain confidential. We have published the remaining 67 non-confidential responses on our [website](#).
- 1.3 A further 94,032 responses were received through an online campaign called *Fix Britain's Internet*, arranged by TalkTalk, Sky, Vodafone, Three and the Federation of Communication Services. This note summarises the key themes from these responses.
- 1.4 The majority of these respondents submitted text provided by the campaign, which is reproduced below:

“For the attention of Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom.

This email is my response to Ofcom's consultation about the future of Britain's internet. Thank you, Sharon for asking for our opinions. I wanted to write to you as Chief Executive to tell you why having great broadband matters to me and what I believe needs to happen.

I believe my family, my community and our local businesses deserve the best broadband in the world. Whether it's finding a job, doing the shopping, educating our kids or falling in love, the internet is essential to our lives and futures.

Millions of people are not getting the broadband they need today because Openreach is run for the benefit of BT shareholders, not the country. I want to see my money invested in faster, more reliable services and the best technology possible. Instead, things seem to be getting worse.

I'm pleased that Ofcom has agreed things need to change. Ofcom has said separating Openreach entirely is the "cleanest and most clear-cut long term solution". I know this is a big decision, but you have my full support to be bold and do whatever is necessary to create an Openreach that works for the whole of Britain.”

- 1.5 Around 4,000 respondents via this route provided their own unique submissions, in addition to or instead of the text set out above. Figure 1 below provides an indicative overview of the key themes raised by these responses.

Figure 1: Indicative overview of non-standard responses

Theme	Number of responses	Percentage of total non-standard responses
Broadband speed	1650	42%
Superfast broadband roll-out	871	22%
Quality of service	556	14%
Pro-structural separation	434	11%
Non-BT criticism	107	3%
Competition/monopoly/choice	88	2%
BT supportive	80	2%
International comparisons	63	2%
Price	50	1%

- 1.6 Those respondents providing their own unique submissions came from a variety of backgrounds, including small business owners, home workers, students, and individuals writing on behalf of their respective household or community. Around ninety per cent of these responses raised one or more of four main themes:
- *Strong dissatisfaction with broadband speeds (c.42% of unique responses):* respondents said that they receive broadband speeds much slower than those advertised, limiting their ability to stream online video, play online video games or use the internet for educational or business purposes.
 - *Concerns over the lack of superfast broadband in their area (c.22% of unique responses):* respondents voiced concern that BT's superfast broadband roll-out did not cover their premises or that a promised roll-out had been delayed in their area. Many consumers suggested a link between these problems with an absence of competition in their area. This concern was raised by respondents from both urban and rural areas of the country.
 - *Concerns with the quality of service received from Openreach and retail service providers (c.14% of unique responses):* respondents highlighted issues with unreliable connections and faults on their lines, including difficulties in getting these issues resolved promptly. Respondents also expressed concerns over the level of customer service provided by their retail service provider, including with BT and other providers.
 - *Support for separation of Openreach from BT (c.11% of unique responses):* respondents offered their support for an alternative model for the reform of Openreach.

- 1.7 In addition to these main themes, a smaller number of respondents (c.10% in total) raised further issues. These included:
- *Alternative views on the performance of communications providers:* some responses cited positive consumer experiences with BT and Openreach, while others raised concerns about the service delivered by other providers, including Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media. Some respondents called on BT's competitors to invest in infrastructure themselves.
 - *Criticism of the Fix Britain's Internet campaign:* respondents were concerned that the campaign could cause the commercial interests of rival telecommunications companies to be prioritised over the development of the UK's broadband infrastructure.
 - *International comparisons:* respondents compared UK broadband speeds to those in other countries, expressing concern that UK customers and businesses are falling behind international peers.
 - *Choice of service provider:* respondents expressed frustration with the lack of choice of providers and pricing options in their area. Respondents often indicated they had no alternative provider or pricing option to choose from.

- 1.8 We are grateful for the time that all individuals took to respond to our consultation. We are taking these views into consideration as we continue to work on the details of the proposal.

- 1.9 We are particularly concerned to hear of the frustration and poor experiences suffered by people and businesses across the UK, of which these responses are an example. Improving the experiences of phone and broadband services is central to our wider Digital Communications Review. Reform of Openreach is an important aspect of this, alongside other steps we are taking to promote investment, competition, improved quality of service and clearer information for everyone.
- 1.10 Many individuals provided personal responses, describing unsatisfactory experiences with one or more internet service providers. We want to hear from consumers who are suffering problems with their service, as this helps us monitor current issues, and can lead to us investigating companies. Advice about how to report a complaint or an issue is available [here](#).