



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

Date: 15 October To: Will Pinkney

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## Consultation Response

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### Ofcom Annual Plan

Which? exists to make individuals as powerful as the organisations they deal with in their daily lives. We are now the largest consumer body in the UK with almost 800,000 members: we understand consumers and what makes them tick. We operate as an independent, a-political, group social enterprise working for all consumers and funded solely by our commercial ventures. We receive no government money, public donations, or other fundraising income. We plough the money from our commercial ventures back into our campaigns and free advice for all.

Which? welcomes the opportunity to comment on Ofcom's draft annual plan. In general we support Ofcom's proposed strategy however there is room to give a greater priority to consumer interests.

Broadband and mobile phone communications are increasingly seen by consumers as essential to their lives. Yet consumers report worryingly low levels of confidence in the telecoms industry and there are areas of significant consumer frustration and detriment.

Despite recent infrastructure investments, issues with mobile coverage and reliability and quality of broadband speeds persist. Meanwhile, consumers struggle with the complexity of mobile pricing structures as well as a lack of transparency due to the bundling of individual services.

Finally, problems with switching mean that there are significant barriers to people moving telecoms providers. Consumers may incur unnecessary costs, like paying to unlock their mobile sim, and spend unnecessary time coordinating the switch because, unlike in energy or banking, they have to contact both their current and new provider to switch.

In the next year, Which? wants Ofcom to focus on reforms to both the mobile and broadband retail markets, making tariffs clearer and more comparable, including the separation of mobile handset and service charges, and ensuring companies that are only allowed to advertise broadband speeds that the majority of their customers will actually be able to achieve.

#### 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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We also want Ofcom to make it easier to switch by moving to a gaining provider-led system and making free unlocking of handsets compulsory. There would be more incentive for suppliers to focus on retaining customers at all parts of the journey, rather than the end-point, if consumers did not have to contact their existing provider before switching.

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