

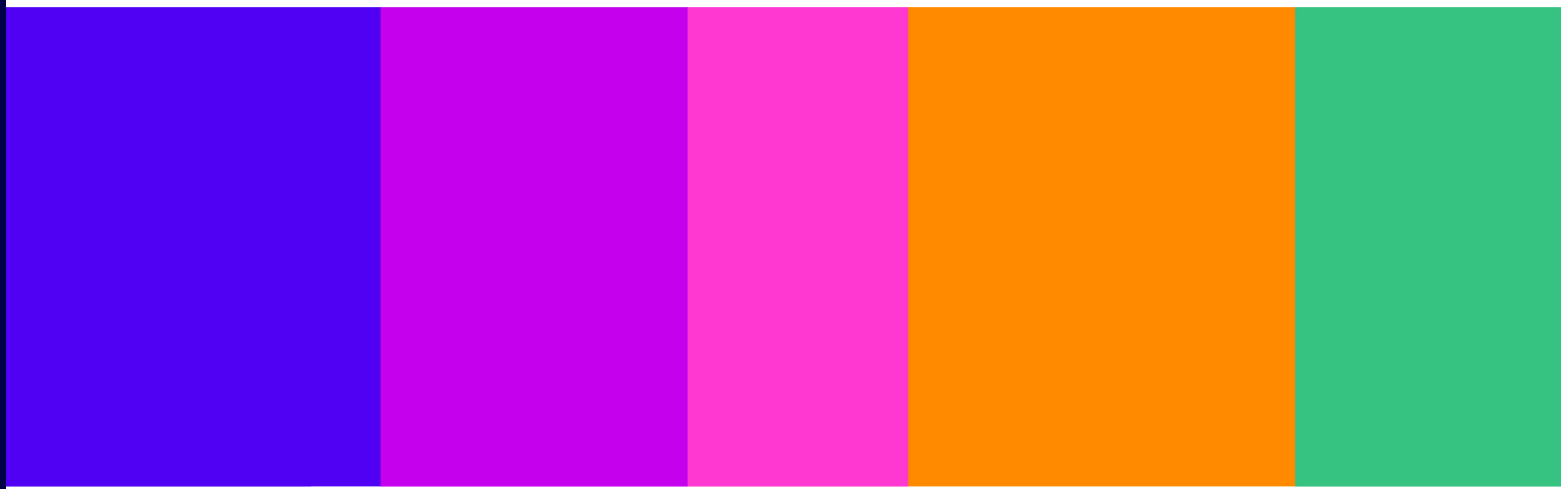
D2D licence exemption regulations update

Notice that Ofcom has made the Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device Satellite Communications) (Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations 2026

Statement

Published 18 June 2026

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1. Overview

- 1.1 This document provides notice that Ofcom has made the Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device Satellite Communications) (Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 (the “Amending Regulations”). The Amending Regulations amend the [Wireless Telegraphy \(Direct to Device Satellite Communications\) \(Exemption\) Regulations 2026](#) (the “D2D Exemption Regulations”), which created a licence exemption for mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices connecting to Direct to Device (“D2D”) services that meet the criteria set out in the Regulations.

What we have decided – in brief

We have today made the Amending Regulations. The Regulations create a new licence exemption for mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices connecting to D2D services provided using specific frequencies in the 900 MHz band¹, in the UK. This follows our decision in April 2026 to approve a licence variation to enable VodafoneThree to provide D2D services using its licensed spectrum in 900 MHz.

This decision follows a series of consultations and statements relating to our approach to authorising D2D services. Making the Amending Regulations implements Ofcom policy decisions set out in our December Statement regarding the use of mobile handsets and other SIM enabled devices for D2D services provided by a Mobile Network Operator (MNO) in partnership with a Satellite Operator.

These regulations are intended to come into effect on 10 July 2026.

The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. The decisions we have taken, and our reasoning are set out in the full document.

¹ The permitted frequencies are 925.1 – 930.1 MHz and 880.1 – 885.1 MHz. The Amending Regulations also set out the accompanying technical parameters which must be met for the exemption to be valid.

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 Ofcom is responsible for authorising use of the radio spectrum. We do this by granting wireless telegraphy licences under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 (the “WT Act”) or by making regulations exempting users from the requirement to hold such a licence.
- 2.2 Ofcom has the statutory power under section 8(3) and 122(7) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 (the “WTA”) to make regulations to exempt the establishment, installation or use of wireless telegraphy stations or apparatus from the requirement to be licensed under section 8(1) WTA.
- 2.3 In 2025, we developed and implemented an authorisation framework for the provision of D2D services in the UK. On 9 December 2025, we published a Statement (the “December Statement”), setting out our final decisions to authorise the use of spectrum bands used by the UK’s Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) for satellite Direct to Device (D2D) services.
- 2.4 In February 2026 we approved a licence variation request from VMO2 to allow operation of D2D services in specific frequencies in the 1800 MHz spectrum band (subject to compliance with specified technical parameters). In February we made the [D2D Exemption Regulations](#)², creating an exemption from the requirement to be licensed for mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices using D2D services in the specified 1800 MHz frequencies. VMO2 launched a D2D service in February 2026.
- 2.5 In April 2026, we approved a licence variation to enable VodafoneThree to provide D2D services using specific frequencies in its licensed spectrum in 900 MHz. In accordance with the WT Act, and as set out in our December Statement, we then provided [notice](#)³ of our proposal to make new regulations to amend the D2D Exemption Regulations to add frequencies over which VodafoneThree intends to provide D2D services⁴ and to include the accompanying technical parameters (the “Notice of Proposed Regulations”).

Comments and representations

- 2.6 We published the Notice of Proposed Regulations on 15 April 2025. The Notice included a copy of the [Proposed Regulations](#). Stakeholders had until 18 May 2026 to make any representations.

Stakeholder responses

- 2.7 We received 2 stakeholder responses to the Notice of Proposed Regulations, one from VodafoneThree and one from an individual. The responses are summarised below, and a copy of each response can be found in full on the [Ofcom website](#).

² S.I. 2026/139.

³ Before making any regulations, we are required by section 122(4) of the WT Act to give notice of our proposal to do so.

⁴ The permitted frequencies are 925.1 – 930.1 MHz and 880.1 – 885.1 MHz.

VodafoneThree

- 2.8 VodafoneThree agreed that the Proposed Regulations correctly implement the decisions made in the December Statement as applied to the variation granted for VodafoneThree's 900 MHz spectrum licence.

Individual response

- 2.9 The response agreed that the Proposed Regulations accurately reflect the intended extension of the permitted frequencies and associated technical parameters for D2D services, as outlined in the Notice of Proposed Regulations.
- 2.10 The response also highlighted that the Proposed Regulations primarily focus on spectrum access and transmission parameters, raising concern that they "don't address the system-level implications of integrating satellite-based communications into mass-market mobile networks".
- 2.11 The respondent also provided a list of regulatory considerations that may support further analysis on the issues raised and proposed additional amendments to the Regulations to address those issues.

Ofcom response

- 2.12 The purpose of the Proposed Regulations is to enable the licence exempt use of mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices with the frequencies on which VodafoneThree is permitted to provide D2D services, in line with the regulatory policy and implementation approach on which we have previously consulted.⁵
- 2.13 Accordingly, we sought comments on whether the Proposed Regulations correctly gave effect to our decision to enable VodafoneThree to provide D2D services on the permitted frequencies, consistent with the decisions taken in our September 2025 Statement and the December 2025 Statement.
- 2.14 We note that both respondents agreed that the Proposed Regulations correctly gave effect to our decision.
- 2.15 We have also considered the broader comments made by one respondent but consider that they are outside the scope of the specific consultation on Proposed Regulations relating to spectrum use.⁶

Ofcom's decision

- 2.16 Having carefully considered the comments received, we have decided to proceed with making the Amending Regulations in the form published in our Notice of Proposed Regulations, subject only to some minor typographical amendments.

Document structure

- 2.17 Section 3 sets out Ofcom's decision to make the Regulations and next steps.

⁵ See paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4.

⁶ The obligations for satellite comms providers are the same as fixed and mobile providers when providing electronic communications networks and services. This will include obligations in the Communications Act 2003 (including security obligations as defined within sections 105A-D, J, and K, if the provider operates a public electronic communication network or service) and Ofcom's [General Conditions of Entitlement](#).

- 2.18 **Annex 1** contains a final version of the Regulations in the form submitted for registration and publication.
- 2.19 **Annex 2** contains a copy of the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Regulations.

3. Our decision to make the Regulations

Making and publication of the Regulations

- 3.1 This document gives notice that we have made the Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device satellite communications) (Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 (the “Amending Regulations”), on 18 June 2026, and they will be available on legislation.gov.uk.
- 3.2 A copy of the final version of the Amending Regulations is also set out in Annex 1 of this document for indicative purposes, in the form submitted for registration and publication after it was made by Ofcom. However, legislation.gov.uk is the only authorised source for published statutory instruments. The Regulatory Impact Assessment is also set out in Annex 2 for indicative purposes.

Next steps

- 3.3 The Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device satellite communications) (Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 will come into force on 10 July 2026.
- 3.4 If any MNO wishes to offer D2D services on any of its licensed frequencies listed in the December Statement, which are not yet authorised, that MNO may request a licence variation.
- 3.5 The process for the licence variation is set out in paragraphs 5.3 – 5.5 of the December Statement. Once any licence variation has been approved, we will consult on making further amending Regulations with a view to adding the relevant frequencies and accompanying technical parameters.

A1. The Regulations

- A1.1 A final version of the amended D2D Exemption Regulations, in the form submitted for registration and publication can be found [here](#).

A2. Regulatory Impact Assessment

Introduction

- A2.1 Ofcom acts in accordance with Government practice that, where a statutory regulation is made, a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) must be undertaken. We also comply with our duty under section 7 of the Communications Act 2003 (the “2003 Act”) to undertake impact assessments.
- A2.2 On 15 April 2026 Ofcom published a Notice of Proposed Regulations (the “Notice”) to exempt mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices from the requirement to be licenced under section 8(1) Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 when such devices are established, installed or used for D2D services provided over 925.1 – 930.1 MHz and 880.1 – 885.1 MHz, in compliance with the accompanying technical parameters.⁷
- A2.3 We proposed to give effect to this proposal by amending the Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device Satellite Communications) (Exemption) Regulations 2026 (the “D2D Exemption Regulations”)⁸
- A2.4 This Annex is a regulatory impact assessment relating to Ofcom’s proposal to make these regulations, which will be known as the Wireless Telegraphy (Direct to Device Satellite Communications) (Exemption) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 (the “Regulations”).
- A2.5 This analysis is consistent with Government practice on RIAs and Ofcom’s duty under the 2003 Act. The RIA considers whether the benefits of exemption of devices used for D2D services, as set out in the Regulations, outweigh the costs involved.
- A2.6 Regulatory impact assessments are a valuable way of assessing different options for regulation and showing why the preferred option was chosen. They form part of best practice policymaking and are commonly used by many regulators. In producing the assessment in this document, Ofcom has had regard to such general guidance as it considers appropriate, including [Cabinet Office guidance](#).

The issue under consideration and the citizen/consumer interest

- A2.7 The Regulations considered in this RIA form part of an authorisation framework to enable mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices to connect to D2D networks in areas not covered by the terrestrial networks.
- A2.8 As set out in the December Statement, in order to provide D2D services, MNOs must first apply to vary the wireless telegraphy licence relating to the frequencies over which they would like to provide D2D services. The variation will incorporate the [D2D licence schedule](#), setting out the conditions we require to be met before D2D services can be provided.
- A2.9 The Regulations, which create a licence exemption for mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices connecting to D2D services that meet the criteria set out in the

⁷ These are the frequencies over which VodafoneThree are permitted to provide D2D services.

⁸ S.I. 2026/139.

Regulations, are required to enable customers to lawfully connect to D2D services and therefore to enable this technology.

- A2.10 We believe that citizens and consumers will benefit from the introduction of D2D services in the UK. The ability to access D2D services will mean that consumers and businesses will have mobile connectivity in areas previously under- or unserved by terrestrial networks. This technology also has the potential to provide connectivity during power outages or localised network faults which affect terrestrial networks.

Proposal, purpose and intended effect

- A2.11 The Regulations amend the D2D Exemption Regulations to add the relevant frequencies and accompanying technical parameters to enable people to use mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices to connect to D2D services provided by VodafoneThree.
- A2.12 In the following documents, we have consulted and made decisions on the policies behind the changes that the Regulations implement, and full impact assessments have been undertaken where relevant and appropriate:
- a) In July 2024, we published a [Call for Input](#) (CFI) which sought views on stakeholders' interests in offering, and the potential demand for, D2D services.
 - b) In March 2025, we published a [Consultation](#), setting out options for ways in which we could authorise D2D services. This included creating an exemption regulation for mobile handsets and SIM-enabled devices that connect to D2D services provided by an MNO whose wireless telegraphy licence has been varied to include coordination clauses for the provision of D2D services.
 - c) In September 2025, we published a [Statement and Further Consultation](#) setting out our decision to create an authorisation framework as described above. In the publication we set out our Notice of Proposed Regulations to exempt handsets connecting to D2D services. As identified in paragraphs 3.66 – 3.69 of the December Statement, we received support to make these Regulations from a range of stakeholders.
 - d) On 9 December 2025, we published a [Statement](#) (the "December Statement"), setting out our final decisions to authorise the use of spectrum bands used by the UK's Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) for satellite Direct to Device (D2D) services. Alongside this, we published the final draft Regulations. We note that no specific comments were made on the Regulations themselves, other than some broad expressions of support.
 - e) On 17 February 2026, we published the [final D2D Exemption Regulations](#) for the authorisation of satellite direct to device services. This document provided notice that Ofcom had made the statutory instrument which creates a licence exemption for mobile handsets and other SIM-enabled devices connecting to D2D services that meet the criteria set out in the Regulations. We also inserted the frequencies on which VMO2 (and its satellite partner) wished to provide D2D services on.
 - f) On 15 April 2026, we [approved VodafoneThree's licence variation](#), adding the D2D licence schedule to the relevant VodafoneThree licence to authorise VodafoneThree and its associated Satellite Operator partner to provide D2D services in the 900 MHz spectrum band (925.1 – 930.1 and 880.1 – 885.1 MHz). We also published [notice of our intention to amend](#) the D2D Exemption Regulations to add the frequencies over which VodafoneThree intends to provide D2D services and include the accompanying technical parameters.

- A2.13 This process enabled us to identify and assess the authorisation options available to us, as well as assess the impact of our proposals on stakeholders.
- A2.14 This RIA should be read in conjunction with the above documents.

The policy objective and public benefit

- A2.15 Our decision to authorise D2D services in the UK is consistent with our statutory duties. Ofcom's principal duties are to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters, and to further the interests of consumers in relevant markets, where appropriate by promoting competition. In discharging these principal duties, we have a duty to secure optimal use of spectrum and encourage innovation and investment in telecom networks and services.
- A2.16 We believe that by making the Regulations we will enable consumers and business to access D2D services, which will further the interests of citizens and consumers by:
- a) Improving the coverage and reliability of mobile connectivity particularly in rural areas, reflecting Ofcom's mission to make communications work for everyone, wherever they are in the UK;
 - b) Enhancing resilience and access to emergency (999) services; and
 - c) Ensuring the timely availability of these services for consumers in the UK.
- A2.17 We are securing the optimal use of spectrum by:
- a) Supporting investment and innovation in new uses; and
 - b) Opening new opportunities for MNOs to use their licensed spectrum holdings more intensively.

Benefits to citizens and consumers

- A2.18 We continue to consider there are several benefits of enabling consumers and businesses access to D2D services, including:
- a) Extending mobile connectivity (which may include messaging, voice and data coverage) beyond the reach of terrestrial networks, potentially enabling ubiquitous, outdoor coverage across 100% of the UK landmass as constellations roll out and technology matures;
 - b) Providing a degree of backup coverage during power outages or localised network faults which affect terrestrial base stations, such as natural disasters or extreme weather events, enhancing the resilience of mobile networks; and
 - c) Improving access to emergency (999) services as a result of the above.
- A2.19 We continue to believe that being able to access D2D services without having to first licence devices means that consumers and businesses will benefit from increased reliability and resilience of mobile connectivity services without having to take action. In particular, this will benefit consumers and businesses located in remote areas by providing choice for connectivity.

Cost to business, including small business and the voluntary sector

- A2.20 The businesses most directly affected by the Regulations are the Mobile Network Operators and Satellite Operators. We anticipate the costs faced by those providers will be limited to the costs associated with ensuring compliance with the conditions set out in the Regulations (as well as the related conditions imposed by the authorisation framework more generally). As set out in the September 2025 Statement, we consider this regulatory burden is proportionate because the proposals are necessary for us to meet our statutory duties.
- A2.21 Our decision to make a licence exemption for mobile handsets and SIM-enabled devices that connect to authorised D2D services means that businesses more generally will benefit from the increased connectivity and resilience we expect D2D services will deliver directly, without having to first licence devices before using D2D services. We do not consider that our decision to make these Regulations will have any material cost implications for any particular sectors of society, including the voluntary sector.

Costs to Ofcom

- A2.22 There are one-off administrative costs associated with making regulations, and some future, relatively small, costs associated with updating the Regulations each time a contract between a Satellite Operator and MNO is created, amended, or terminated. We believe that these limited costs will be offset by the benefits to business and consumers outlined above.

Conclusion

- A2.23 We have assessed the impact of introducing and amending the Regulations, both in this regulatory impact assessment and through formal public consultation with stakeholders. In this document in particular, we have considered the impact in terms of the potential benefit to citizens, consumers and businesses, as against the likely costs.
- A2.24 We consider that the decisions set out in the September 2025 Statement, the December Statement and the main body of this statement, as well as those put into effect through the Regulations, will deliver our policy objectives and fulfil our statutory duties.
- A2.25 Overall, Ofcom considers that making the Regulations is likely to generate a net benefit for UK citizens, consumers and businesses, or at worst would have a neutral outcome (to the extent that benefits may depend on the uptake of the new opportunities afforded by the Regulations). The Regulations will enable D2D services, which will deliver benefits for citizens, consumers and businesses. We therefore consider the benefits outweigh the costs associated with the Regulations.

Declaration

- A2.26 I have read this regulatory impact assessment, and I am satisfied that the benefits justify the costs.
- Signed:

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Director of Spectrum Group
For and by the authority of the Office of Communications
Date: 18 June 2026

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