

UK online centres
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Mobile & Auctions team
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

Via Email

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Dear Ofcom

Re: Assessment of future mobile competition and proposals for the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum and related issues

The UK online centres network was set up by government in 1999 to provide public access to computers.

Out of our 3,800 partner centres we reach out to some of the hardest to get online individuals many of whom are socially excluded, 50% of which receive some type of benefit, but with a staggering 60% of our customers progress to take up further education, Information, Advice and Guidance opportunities, volunteering placements or employment.

UK online centres welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation on the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum. These proposals represents a significant step towards helping more people get online.

UK online centres believes that mobile broadband can play an important role in helping the 9 million people who don't use the internet get online. Significantly, those already at a social or financial disadvantage are more likely to be off-line, and missing out on the benefits digital technologies can provide. We would like there to be universal coverage of broadband as long as this is affordable by both customers and Government. Mobile broadband is an important element of the commercial mix, alongside terrestrial offers. Mobile broadband is often the only choice for the most excluded people who don't have a landline and cannot afford one, who frequently move, and may not have a bank account. Ofcom's commitment to maintain a four-player market will avoid the risks of market consolidation and help digital inclusion by ensuring that operators are incentivised to invest in network expansion and compete to offer lower prices.

To deliver a networked nation where everyone can experience the benefits of being online it is now vital that Ofcom consults the mobile operators on what allocation of spectrum they need to support universal coverage at 2mbps in all parts of the UK.

Best wishes

Helen Milner
Managing Director, UK online centres