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THUS Response to the Ofcom consultation “A Review of Consumer Complaints Procedures”

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As part of the Cable&Wireless family of businesses, THUS offers high quality products, services and communications solutions to a broad range of organisations across all sectors of the mid market business arena.

We deliver easy to use voice, data and internet solutions and offer all the advantages and savings of a one stop supplier, with a product range that exceeds expectations. Our proven solutions enable office based, and mobile or flexible workers to integrate fully and securely with scalable, robust networks to deliver communication systems that work. THUS provides solutions to small companies as well as medium sized organisations.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to Ofcom’s consultation on reviewing procedures for dealing with consumer complaints, mindful that the definition for “consumer” fits in with our small business customers. We only have two specific points we’d like to raise:

Definition of a ‘complaint’?

We are concerned about how the definition is to include faults. It is not clear whether faults will always be considered a complaint or whether they will only be a complaint when the fault is unresolved after 8 weeks, or if the customer rings back to complain about the fault not being fixed?

However, regardless of at what stage a fault becomes or should be treated as a complaint, CSPs will still need to record it as a complaint to ensure they know when the status changes to becoming a complaint. This will put an unnecessary overhead on our customer services teams when in reality how faults are dealt with are covered by terms of service and contractual agreements.

Signposting of ADR

Whilst we can see that better awareness of ADR might help customers resolve their issues, signposting those services on our bills poses two main problems:

1. At what point in time the signposting appears will be determined when the next print run is carried out for our stationery. This means that it may not be possible to ascertain a suitable implementation period for this requirement coming into force, particularly if we have large back stock of invoice stationery

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2. It's not clear whether the signpost wording also has to appear on electronic billing platforms. We suspect as the consultation document refers to billing in general it probably will. This will mean that we will have to invest considerable resource to changing our online billing platforms which will require reprogramming of the correct message.

Furthermore we wish to see the wording to be used less prescriptive so that it fits in with the other wording on our invoices and is contextual. At the moment, the Code of Practice wording has a negative tone (“[if] we have been unable to resolve your complaint...”) to it rather than a more positive take of “if you need to make a complaint...” We believe each CP would have its own preferred set of wording.

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