

Dear Sirs

Please find attached my comments relating to your additional review.

Since the time of writing, virgin media has updated broadband their broadband system. In order to to take advantage of this, I had to set up a 'new account' for my broadband. According to their staff the only way I could do this was to set up a direct debit. I supplied virgin media the details of an account that I use for my insurance direct debits. I was assured that this direct debit would be cancelled with immediate effect and would not be used to take payment. Upon checking the account online this morning I found that virgin media have taken £45 from the account thus causing me to go overdrawn and incur a bank charge. I did not receive notification or a bill informing me that this money would be taken. Given that my broadband is £25 per month there is no justification for taking this amount. In addition, I had already paid the bill for April (on 31.03.08). The bill included a £5 penalty charge for paying by BACS.

I have informed you of this as I believe the instance provides supporting evidence against the use of direct debit.

Yours faithfully

Dear Ms Evans

I write with respect to the additional charges review and most specifically to the non direct debit charges. I prefer to pay my bills by BACS at the start of the month when I am paid rather than giving out my bank details and thereby giving companies permission to access to my bank account. My bills are paid on time each month and, in most cases, earlier than necessary. However, due to my desire to retain control over my finances and keep my personal bank account details private, I find that I am subjected to an additional charge. In the case of my cable phone, internet, and TV services I am charged an extra £5 per month for making payment by BACS. This equates to an extra £60 per year, a penalty I find extremely unfair.

Upon querying the non direct debit payment fee with Virgin Media they would neither justify the penalty charge nor provide information with respect to any costs or losses incurred by the company when receiving payment by BACS. Given that BT's charge is only £4.50 per quarter (£18.00 per year) Virgin

Media's penalty charge is both excessive and unreasonably high. The fact that the charge is 'currently under review' would also appear to demonstrate the 'unjustifiable charge' / 'money making scheme' theory is not simply fantasy.

There is no legal requirement in the UK that states consumers are obliged to pay bills by direct debit or that they (consumers) should be forced, against their will, to supply details of their bank accounts to companies providing that person or party with a service and thus give that company access permissions in order to debit money in lieu of services. Indeed, it is the right of a consumer to pay their bills in a way that is easiest for them. Any argument in respect of late payments or the non payment of services received or losing money due to a certain percentage of the payment being retained by the 'pay point/post office' put forward by companies simply do not apply to the way I (and many others) pay bills and on the whole cannot be justified. In many instances, the sum of such charges is merely a money making ruse used by such companies and is, in all probability, much higher than any actual 'loss' and/or cost incurred by the company for receiving payment this way. In addition and more importantly, whilst these companies claim they are subject to these charges, such charges and/or losses are 'tax allowable' when their yearly accounts are made up.

Such charges appear to be a 'modern addition' to the way consumers pay their utility bills and are, in short, a 'ransom demand'. It is worth remembering that these charges were not always added to customers' bills.

I hope that Ofcom will tackle this problem and I hope that my comments have been helpful.

Yours sincerely