

Title:

Forename:

Surname:

Representing:

Self

Organisation (if applicable):

Email:

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep name confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

Yes

Question 1: Do you agree that it is helpful and appropriate for Ofcom to issue guidance on the application of the Regulations to consumer contracts for communications services?:

Yes, provided that guidance represents consumers' interests fairly without unduly favouring providers.

Question 2: Do you agree with Ofcom's proposed guidance regarding core terms and transparency?:

[The meaning of this question is not very clear. You need to get your Plain English on to the phrasing of your questions.]

I generally agree that it is vital that core contract terms should be clear to customers. At present that is not the case with BT.

For example, the most recent contract trumpets the fact that customers can have free UK evening calls by signing a 12 month contract. Two terms are effectively hidden: (1) that the 12 months contract will renew automatically unless cancelled, which was in the small print on the back of the letter and (2) that anyone not signing up to the 12 month contract will have their cost for weekday evening calls raised from 4.5 pence per hour to 96 pence per hour, which was mentioned only on the second page of the detailed terms and conditions. That was neither clear nor fair. And in my view it amounts to blackmailing the customer into signing a 12 month renewal contract.

I also think that Ofcom is favouring existing providers, especially BT, in its conclusions on minimum contract periods and the need for providers to recover costs. Many, perhaps most, BT customers have been customers for a long time. There are no upfront costs to recover. Yet BT is trying to force us all into renewable 12 month contracts by hiking the charges if we don't. Yes, customers can change providers, but some of us don't want to. We just want clear and FAIR terms from BT. That's not what we're getting.

Question 3: Do you agree with Ofcom's proposed guidance (including any administrative thresholds we have set) on non-core terms to which we apply the test of fairness?:

[Again, the question is obscure. Plain English??]

I object very strongly to BT's charge for paying bills by cheque. Ofcom's response is (a) clarity and (b) competition. In other words, if we don't like what our supplier offers, we should go elsewhere.

That does not protect those who may not be savvy enough to shop around such as some elderly customers. And in BT's case, at least, clarity is the last thing that customers get. We have just received two pages of small print relating to the £4.50 per quarter charge for paying by cheque, including a requirement to contract with BT Payment Services who will collect and process the payment. That seems to me to be a transparent device to transfer costs into a separate entity so as to be able to justify the £4.50 cost. I think that Ofcom should investigate the cost structure of BT Payment Services very closely.

Question 4: Are there any other issues that are covered by the Regulations which Ofcom should give guidance on?:

Additional comments: