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3 March 2022

Open letter to OTS Steering Group and fixed voice and broadband providers (IAS and NBICS provided at a fixed location)

One Touch Switch (OTS) implementation – Matching response SLA

I am writing to you to share our views on the SLA for matching response times (i.e. a time limit by which losing providers must send a response to a matching request received via the OTS Hub), which the OTA has told us is under active consideration by the OTS Steering Group. I am concerned that one of the options under consideration is a two-tier approach designed to accommodate some providers who may take as long as two days to respond to a matching request via the Hub. I am therefore writing to set out Ofcom's view on this issue.

From the outset of this project our policy objective of a "quick, easy and reliable switching" process has been at the forefront of all conversations that we have had with industry. This means a process that allows all residential customers to switch easily and does not create unnecessary difficulties or barriers that may stop customers going through with a switch. This objective was central in our assessment of the options put forward by industry. At no time did industry indicate that the matching process under OTS might entail significant delays for some residential customer journeys, or indeed a two-tier approach depending on the provider.

We remind providers of the One Touch Switch rules, as well as the new switching rules which require among other things that they maintain simple and efficient processes and that they do not delay or abuse the switching process.¹ Ofcom is not likely to consider a two-tier approach compliant with these rules, whether it relates to the matching step or any other element of the OTS process. We also refer to industry's OTS proposal summary which indicated that "the entire journey up to stage 5 can be completed in a single interaction with the GP."²

Our expectation is for a matching process that would sit within the reasonable parameters of a sales discussion or an online customer order journey and allow customers to get clarity about their order in real time. We consider a target SLA of 60 seconds is a reasonable starting point to meet this expectation.

¹ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/232058/statement-quick-easy-and-reliable-switching.pdf

² https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/212619/option-y-revised-proposal-summary.pdf

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Cristina", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Cristina Luna-Esteban