

Reference: 01683870

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

19 October 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning “Digital Voice” pilots Salisbury and Mildenhall. Your request was received on 28 September 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “FOI Act”).

Background

In December 2020, Openreach started to trial moving customers to full-fibre and voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services in Salisbury and Mildenhall. Ofcom commissioned qualitative research in order to understand consumer attitudes and experiences of migration to VoIP services in the Salisbury and Mildenhall trial areas. Findings of this research are set out in [this report](#).

Your request & our response

I want to find out about the apparently-successful "Digital Voice" experiments in Salisbury and Mildenhall that have preceded the decision to start the conversion on a mass scale.

I want to understand the success criteria that were set in advance for the pilots, the period of the pilots, and the results obtained. I would like these separating out for the two pilot areas. If there were any control groups used for comparison, I would like to know what these were, and what the comparative results were.

The Salisbury and Mildenhall trials were implemented by Openreach. Openreach published a [consultation](#) at the beginning of the trials in June 2019, this is set out on their website.

We can confirm that we do hold some information within the scope of this request, specifically some data on the original success criteria and progress of the trials. We are unable to disclose this information as we consider that disclosure of this information is exempt under section 44 of the FOI Act. Section 44 of the FOI Act exempts the disclosure of information which is prohibited by another enactment. In this case, the other enactment which prohibits the disclosure of this information is section 393 of the Communications Act 2003, which prohibits Ofcom from disclosing information relating to a particular business (such as Openreach), which it has obtained in the course of

exercising our powers, unless we have the consent of that business or one of the statutory gateways for disclosure under section 393(2) is met, neither of which applies here. Section 44 is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

Ofcom does not have a record of any information relating to control groups.

I want to see whether these areas were typical of the rest of the UK in terms of the levels of access to mobile phone networks. So I would also like to know what proportion of households, in the Salisbury pilot, in the Mildenhall pilot, and in the UK as a whole, have:

a) No usable signal on any mobile network, so would be unable to reach 999 by use of a mobile phone

b) A 999 connection only via an "another-network" connection, so households would be able to reach 999 from a mobile phone, but would not be able to be called back later by the emergency services

Ofcom does hold some information on mobile coverage that is publicly available.

Our [mobile coverage checker](#) gives information on mobile coverage in Salisbury and Mildenhall, and our [Connected Nations report](#) gives information on mobile coverage nationally. These are both available on our website.

To use the mobile coverage checker, the customer will need to use a postcode, then choose map view, then zoom out to see the entire area.

I would also like to see the data and analysis that Ofcom used to decide that these areas were representative of the whole of the UK in terms of their susceptibility to interruptions in the electricity supply.

We do not hold this information.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests.

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF