

References: 1952969, 1962306, 1969005

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

5 March 2025

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your requests for information about Digital Voice.

We received these requests on 5, 14 and 24 February 2025 and we have considered your requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the FOI Act”).

### Your requests

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#### 5 February

1. *Please let me know an estimate of the annual extra cost to individual consumers who do not have broadband currently, of running Digital Voice equipment such as routers. Will this be taken into account in pricing of Digital Voice? Also what is the estimate of the extra annual individual and national consumption of electricity, please?*

#### 14 February

2. *BT have not given domestic customers any prior information about the apparent need to reset all connected devices (PCs, etc.).*

*Why has OFCOM not required BT to be transparent about this, please?*

#### 24 February

3. *Will Ofcom find out and report what BT's performance is, please, as a matter of urgency, and how many customers have been affected?*

### Our response

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#### Background

The move from the traditional Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to digital Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services (also known as digital landlines) is part of a broader, industry-led initiative to modernise the UK's telecoms infrastructure. This transition is driven by advancements in technology and the fact that existing PSTN is beyond its intended lifespan and is becoming increasingly unreliable. BT plans to close its PSTN by January 2027 and other telecom companies are following a broadly similar timescale. While this is an industry decision, Ofcom is closely monitoring this transition – our priority is to ensure that customers, particularly those who are vulnerable, are protected from harm during the migration.

Digital landline services require a broadband connection to function. However, some customers who rely on their landline do not currently have or want a broadband connection. In order to move these particular customers off the PSTN by the January 2027 deadline, BT plans to move them onto an interim solution that replicates the same features of the PSTN without the need to install broadband or change any equipment. This solution will not require any work at the customer's property or for them to take any action. Eligible customers will be contacted by BT when it is time for their service to be moved. We understand that customers will pay the same for this service as they do for their current landline service. However, this service is only temporary – in the longer term, we understand that telecoms providers are developing solutions for customers that do not wish to take a broadband service and these may vary depending on the needs and circumstances of the customer. We anticipate that when these products are available from providers, their specifications and any costs will be made available to customers.

Turning to your request, please find below our responses.

1. *Please let me know an estimate of the annual extra cost to individual consumers who do not have broadband currently, of running Digital Voice equipment such as routers. Will this be taken into account in pricing of Digital Voice? Also what is the estimate of the extra annual individual and national consumption of electricity, please?*

This is not information that we hold.

2. *BT have not given domestic customers any prior information about the apparent need to reset all connected devices (PCs, etc.).*

*Why has OFCOM not required BT to be transparent about this, please?*

Some people use their telephone connection to support non-voice devices such as telecare alarms and burglar alarms. These devices may need to be reconfigured or replaced when phone services are moved to digital landlines. We expect telecoms providers to ensure that all communications regarding the migration to digital landlines are clear and timely, and include information about the potential impact on equipment that uses the PSTN. You can read more about our expectations of telecoms providers during the migration [here](#). We recommend that if you own any such connected devices, you ensure that your telecoms provider is aware. As providers do not supply or support these devices, they will be unable to advise if individual devices will be compatible with digital landlines, so you will need to contact the provider or manufacturer of your device to check this.

3. *Will Ofcom find out and report what BT's performance is, please, as a matter of urgency, and how many customers have been affected?*

As the UK's communications regulator, Ofcom receives complaints from customers about their landline, fixed broadband, pay-monthly mobile and pay-TV services. To better understand the reasons for dissatisfaction among residential customers in our sectors, we compile that data and determine the number of complaints received by provider and by service. Our most recent complaints data, covering July – September 2024 is available on our website <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/service-quality/telecoms-and-pay-tv-complaints/>.

We are unable to confirm nor deny whether we hold information on how many BT customers have been affected, as to provide such information would fall under the exemption in section 44 of the

FOI Act. Disclosure of whether we hold such information is prohibited under section 393(1) of the Communications Act 2003. Under section 44 of the FOI Act, information is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure is prohibited under another enactment – in this case, section 393 of the Communications Act, unless we have the consent of that business or one of the statutory gateways under section 393(2) of the Act is met, neither of which applies here. Section 44 is an absolute exemption under the FOI Act and does not require a public interest test.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

## Information Requests

### Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team ([information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)) to request an internal review.

### Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).