

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you agree with our proposal to amend the treatment of excess costs in determining eligibility for a USO connection, where excess costs are above £5,000? Please set out your reasons and supporting evidence for your response.</p>	<p>Confidential? – N</p> <p>I do not agree with the proposal as drafted as it does not contain guidance on the definition of the “cluster” or technology that BT can use as the basis of their costing. These two elements are crucial to the quote given to the customer.</p> <p>I comment below on the basis of my own experience as an illustration but my position is not unique. The impact of the lack of a requirement to balance the definition of “clusters” and the technology adopted in a manner that maximises benefit to the community reduces the opportunity for those in USO areas to benefit from “decent broadband”.</p> <p>I have been confirmed by BT as not having “decent broadband”. In September 2020 I received a quote from BT as a USO customer. This was for £ 167,877.60 including vat, would have served 15 properties and been based on fibre to my premises.</p> <p>I live in a rural, but not remote, area, on the edge of a village of some 200 houses with some 100 other properties within the general area. Currently all these houses are served by the lines from a cabinet that is at least 2 miles away. I am aware that a number of these have been through the tests and accepted as USO customers. (Others have not bothered; hearing the quotes provided to two of those who have asked for a quote has discouraged at least two neighbours).</p> <p>Some of the houses could apparently get “decent broadband” using 4G and BT have proposed this as a USO solution for some premises. Others, including my property, are not considered able to be offered a 4G solution.</p> <p>I, and other interested neighbours, have tried to encourage BT to take a community-based</p>

approach. I am not an expert but a fibre-connected cabinet in the village could be expected make a significant difference to broadband speeds for many of the houses in the village.

The service I was being offered was based on FTTP, and 15 premises, which would have radically improved my broadband but not that of most of my neighbours.

In your consultation about sharing costs of the USO with operators you raised the question of the costs becoming excessive because the solution being offered might be over-engineered and introduced a protection against that. It does not seem that the equivalent protection against high costs from overspecified solutions is being offered to consumers.

A simpler, cabinet-based, solution would not give me the same very high speeds as FTTP but might have improved the speeds to a reasonable level while spreading the costs over many more premises. This would both encourage take-up by reducing costs per house, and allow more people and businesses to share in the benefit of improved broadband.

It is possible that this was not a realistic solution in my particular circumstance but it seems that it was not even considered. As a result I have a quote for £167,877.60 which, unsurprisingly, I did not accept, and our community members continue to struggle to live and work with broadband speeds of 1mb upload and about 3mb download.

While revising the methodology of costing the USO I request that Ofcom include an obligation on BT to consider the "cluster" and technology to be adopted so as to maximise the benefit of decent broadband to the community and to make at least some of their thinking available to the interested parties.

Thank you.