

Dear Ofcom

I only recently read of this welcome Broadband supply change you are promoting for April 2023. I realise the consultation is closed but want to bring to your attention one particular aspect that I believe will be integral to the success of the change. That is the issue of email addresses.

As you can see from my email address I am a British Telecom (BT) customer and have been for many years. This is not intended as a criticism of their service, rather it is an illustration of my point which I believe will apply to many ISPs.

Last year BT changed its email provision as I'm sure you will be aware. It was part of a long running transition by BT away from their previous reliance on Yahoo for emails. The transition from a user's perspective was appalling for many reasons. Putting aside the shortfalls of the BT product, arguably the biggest difficulty was the requirement to change all existing ".....@yahoo.co.uk" email addresses to "....@btinternet.com" addresses.

Informing contacts using the former email to use the latter in future was and is straightforward enough. It just requires an email notifying each of the transition and requesting they use the new address subsequently. Updating address books is a minor chore for each contact too. The considerably greater challenge is to inform companies including utility and banking organisations. The reason for this is each account requires the user to log in, often with two factor authorisation (good practice) and requiring multiple verification steps including responses to both new and old email addresses along with confirmation of data recorded when the account was first established.

In my case I had to do this for around 150 different companies and it took me weeks of dedicated, meticulous work. Even after that a few companies remained difficult to persuade to make the change (sometimes because of their own IT systems) and in a handful of cases I simply had to close the account and request my details be removed under General Data Protection Regulations.

This awful experience in itself made me feel like changing my ISP but the thought of having to repeat the exercise is the main reason why I did not. I believe this email constraint could severely undermine your "One Touch Switch" initiative. In my case I am retired and could afford the time and trouble to methodically follow through the process. Many others will not have the time to do so.

Of course there is a slight alternative. That would be for me to leave BT but sign up to their BT Premium Email. A misnomer if ever there was one as the only premium is the charge for its use, currently £7-50 per month. ("Premium" doesn't refer to the quality of their product!) You will appreciate I'm sure, that the constraint is not dissimilar to the issue you addressed in the past whereby customers changing phone supplier should (and can now) retain their old number when they move supplier.

I'm raising this matter so you can attend to it. Clearly retention of an old email address will have some financial impact on the previous supplier having to maintain it. However, a shared industry approach seems entirely appropriate and users would obviously prefer a zero cost option i.e. suppliers absorb the cost themselves. An industry wide approach could also minimise actual resources required. As the regulator, I am hopeful that you can influence what eventually emerges under the new arrangements and in particular - act in the interests of the consumer.

I would be very interested to hear your response and hope you will take this matter forward.