Vodafone Response to Ofcom Consultation:

"Improving the accuracy of Calling Line Identification (CLI) data"

We agree with the intent of the proposed modification, however the form of wording suggested by Ofcom leads to consequences that we do not believe Ofcom intended.

As phrased, the revised GC C6.6 would require Communications Providers to block any calls that contain CLI Data which is not dialable. However, CLI Data is defined generically as

"the contents of all signalling messages which can be used between Communications Providers and/or between Communications Providers and End-Users to signal the origin of the call and/or the identity of the calling party, including any associated privacy markings"

This means that CLI Data incorporates both the Network Number and Presentation Number CLI (even though it is only the Presentation Number CLI that would be presented to the called user so is relevant for dialling subsequent calls).

It is quite common for enterprises to have a single Network Number that quite correctly identifies the point of ingress into the public network, but Presentation Numbers that are used for display purposes and to allow return calls to be made. In this configuration, the Network Number should never be displayed to the called party, unless the terminating network is failing to comply with the technical standards (ND1016[1]). In many cases, the Network Number equates to the switchboard number for the enterprise concerned, or the enterprise customer arranges for any stray calls to that number to be routed to their switchboard. However, there is no compulsion on them to do so (as it is a number that is never intended for display purposes); originating Communication Providers would have no immediate visibility of whether the enterprise has done this, and the enterprises themselves are not within scope of GC C6.

Since the revised GC C6.6 insists that Regulated Providers block any calls where *"the CLI Data provided is invalid, non-dialable or does not uniquely identify the caller"*, this would imply that there is a requirement to block calls where a return call to the Network Number does not connect. We believe that this is incorrect and would lead to a requirement to renumber an unspecified (and not easily traced) quantity of enterprise customers, who are not generating nuisance calls and are operating fully in line with accepted industry practice.

Although it might be possible to address this issue via language in the CLI Guidelines, we do not believe that this is the best way forward as the General Conditions take precedence over any associated guidance. We therefore believe that this issue needs to be addressed in the wording of the GC itself. We suggest that the wording of the revision needs to be reversed, i.e. to say, "*the Regulated Provider must take all reasonable steps to identify calls where the CLI Data is invalid, or does not contain a number that uniquely identifies the caller, or does not contain a number which is dialable, and prevent those calls from being connected to the*

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[1] NICC ND1016, Requirements on Communications Providers in relation to Customer Line Identification display services and other related services

called party". Under this wording, both the Network Number and Presentation Number would need to be valid, and there would need to be a data element in the CLI Data that uniquely identifies the caller (i.e. the Network Number) and a data element that is dialable for a return call (i.e. the Presentation Number).

We note and welcome that the wording incorporates technical feasibility via the usage of the words "reasonable steps". We are working to ensure that all of our voice platforms support the required blocking, but it is not proportionate to modify platforms that are cited for removal from the network within months.

> 2. Do you agree with our proposal to bring this modification into force six months after the publication of our statement (which is planned for Autumn 2022)? If not, please provide reasons why a different date would be appropriate.

It is important that there is an agreed and industry-aligned implementation date. We are comfortable with the six-month implementation date as proposed by Ofcom (but see our comments to Q3).

> 3. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the CLI guidance? Please provide reasons for your response. Please set out your comments on each of the proposed changes separately.

Before turning to the actual wording of the CLI Guidance, we believe that the title of the document is worthy of discussion. Ofcom's CLI guidelines are perhaps an example of where the "politeness" of the English language can be unhelpful. "Guidance" implies a softness to the material in the document, that it is Ofcom providing some assistance/education on how CLI should be provisioned; almost a sense of optionality in complying with the contents. In reality, those well-versed in this topic will know full well that the intended meaning is the document provides guidance of what Ofcom <u>expects</u> of Communication Providers if they are to assert compliance with GC C6, which has full force of law.

On several occasions, we have had to explain to both customers and other Communication Providers that the CLI Guidance is not merely some helpful guide, but instead what must be done to achieve regulatory compliance. We believe that it would be helpful if Ofcom reconsidered the title of the document to make this clear – for example to re-title the document "Requirements for the provision of Calling Line Identification facilities…" or "CLI Compliance Manual".

We now turn to the proposed amendments:

UK calls should include a 10- or 11-digit number

We believe that Ofcom may have overlooked Childline[2] (0800 1111), and a small amount of residual traffic to Welsh NHS services that have not migrated to 111 hence have a Presentation Number of 0845 4647[3].

As the existing text already stated that *"it must be a number that is designated as a 'Telephone Number available for Allocation' in the National Telephone Numbering Plan and be shown as allocated in the National Numbering Scheme"*, we believe that this *defacto* already specified the number length and avoided the bear trap of known short-length numbers. We therefore believe that Ofcom either shouldn't make this change to the CLI Guidance, or alternatively needs to comprehensively specify which short-length numbers should be permitted.

Providers should identify and block CLIs which should not be used for outbound calls (such as by use of the DNO list)

We support this, subject to Ofcom keeping the length of this list at a manageable level.

Blocking calls with invalid CLI that originate abroad

We support this change. It is our understanding that Ofcom's intent is that such blocking should also apply to calls with no CLI (whether intentionally or due to upstream signalling interworking issues). We are comfortable with such an approach, but believe that the wording of the Guidelines clause 4.16 should explicitly state this. It is also our understanding that with this change adopted, there is no circumstance under which a transit network should be injecting an 08979 number into the CLI Data, therefore meaning that a) Ofcom could consider revoking the allocations in this number range and b) the receipt of a call with an 08979 CLI from an upstream network would be grounds to block calls. We would welcome Ofcom explicitly stating whether it agrees this logic (and if not, why).

Calls originating from abroad that use a UK CLI

We note that the revised Guidance narrowly calls for the blocking of calls from overseas bearing a UK Network Number CLI. As previously agreed with Ofcom, we are happy to block such calls; the more aggressive approach of blocking overseas calls with UK Presentation Number CLIs cannot be considered without wider consultation with the community of UK enterprises that utilise off-shore call-centres.

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[2] It may well be that Ofcom has consulted with Childline and confirmed that they will never use the short form as a presentation number, but if this is the case we would have expected Ofcom to confirm it in the consultation.
[3] We understand that these are due for removal but were still seeing small volumes in spring 2022.

Although we support blocking of calls with UK Network Number CLIs, the level of effort required to implement this change is significant — it will require hundreds of thousands of lines of configuration on international gateways, particularly in order to pin-hole through calls to UK MSRNs in order that calls to overseas mobile customers roaming in the UK do not fail.

As Ofcom understands, the situation of international vs UK origination is not clear-cut, with a series of cases such as cloud providers (which are used by many UK enterprises and the public sector) appearing as international, and overseas networks that serve UK customers similarly appearing as international. We are therefore inevitably dependent upon upstream international networks correctly identifying which calls actually originated in the UK versus overseas, and our blocking capability can only be as good as their performance. Inevitably there will be "false positives" of legitimate traffic being inadvertently blocked, and conversely some traffic that would ideally be blocked will leak through. We recognise that from a consumer protection perspective Ofcom's preference may be for gateway providers to over- rather than under- block, but we appeal to Ofcom to provide regulatory support where conflicts arise.

It is important that the major international gateway providers implement this change on an aligned timeline. Absent this, upstream networks are very sensitive to the performance of UK gateway providers, and will react adversely to unilateral requests to identify UK vs internationally-originated traffic and/or drops in answer-seize ratios where blocking is implemented. Meeting Ofcom requests to block traffic cannot be allowed to become an activity that distorts competition in the carriage of inbound international traffic. Vodafone can support implementation in spring 2023, and can bring this date forward if Ofcom is able to align the implementation dates of the major international gateway providers.

CLIs that generate an excessive or unexpected call charge - Prohibition on the use of 09 non-geographic numbers

We agree with this clarification to the text.

Use of non-geographic numbers as Network Numbers

We agree with the principle of this change, but believe that the wording needs attention.

We understand that Ofcom intends that numbers commencing 03, 08 and 09 would not be used for Network Numbers at all, that for fixed services Network Numbers only be from 01 & 02 ranges, and for mobile services from 07 number ranges. We believe that there would be merit in setting this out explicitly because, for example, there could be confusion about the usage of 03.

We have some concern around edge cases relating to fixed-mobile convergence. For example, on an FMC service where the user has roamed onto a landline, it may be appropriate to use their 07 number as the Network Number (representing the user making the call) rather than the Network Number dynamically

changing according to the location of the user, but if the Guidance is not carefully worded then this could be precluded.

We note that there are around 390 number blocks assigned in the 05 range. We would welcome Ofcom's clarification on whether these are acceptable as Network Number CLIs and under which circumstances, as they appear to fall under the definition of non-geographic numbers in the National Telephone Numbering Plan.

Display name information

We welcome Ofcom's clarification on this aspect.

Presentation Number type definitions

Although not necessarily for this iteration, we believe that Ofcom should give consideration as to whether the definitions of Type 1-5 CLIs have ongoing relevance. In C7 signalling, there was a significance between Type 1, Type 2 and the remaining classifications, in that the signalling indicated whether the Presentation Number CLI had been provided by the network, the user and validated by the network, or the user and passed unscreened. However, even within this legacy technology, there was no technical significance between Types 3, 4 and 5. With the advent of SIP signalling, there is no signalling distinction between the different types, albeit there remain technical differences between whether each type is screened. The presence/absence of this screening, combined with the nature of the application, drives what contractual documentation is required between the originating Communications Provider and the customer.

We believe that the existing definitions can lead to confusion when communicating with customers – for example, consider an enterprise with a single breakout to the public network at their HQ, covering a series of their sites, one of which contains a call centre. Do calls from the call centre have a Type 3 CLI (because it's remote from the HQ), or a Type 5 CLI (because it's a call centre)? Do calls from the HQ building count as Type 3, given that clause 5.11 of the CLI Guidance says "*A Presentation Number limited to far-end break out scenario…*"?

We believe there may be merit in replacing the existing definitions with a decision tree that specifies the contractual clauses that the customer must sign up to, and the contractual information that must be provided. For example, if the customer is a call-centre making calls on behalf of a third party, evidence of the third party's consent to use their CLI; if the customer is unable to provide an up-front list of CLIs that they intend to use (for purposes of the originating network screening), assurances that they will adhere to the CLI Guidelines. For ease of notation each branch of the tree could be assigned a value, but we are reasonably certain that more than five branches would be required.

> 4. Do you have any comments on the use of 084 and 087 non-geographic numbers as Presentation Numbers and/or on the impact if the use of 084 and 087 numbers as Presentation Numbers was prohibited in the CLI guidance? Are you aware of any examples of the use of 084 or 087 numbers as Presentation Numbers?

As we have set out in previous consultations, those enterprises that choose to use 084 and 087 numbers have explicitly opted to do so, having been given the option of using 03 as an alternative when that range was introduced. We believe that for those enterprises, using the 084/087 number as a Presentation Number CLI on their outbound calls is a reasonable approach. We see moderate volumes of such CLIs traverse our network where we act as an originator, transit and terminating network.

As Ofcom knows, we monitor traffic on our network carefully for evidence of nuisance calling and fraudulent behaviour such as Wangiri fraud. Of the ~✂ numbers/number ranges that are currently blocked on our network, only ~✂ are 084/087 numbers (✂). As such, at this stage we do not believe that there is an evidence base to justify banning the usage of these ranges for Presentation Number purposes.

Vodafone UK

April 2022