

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Do you have any comments on our proposals?</p>	<p>Confidential? – Y / N</p> <p>Individual Protection Solutions (IPS) is a membership organisation, dedicated to protecting consumers from scams, fraud and nuisance marketing communications through both education and the provision of services. Membership is free, with additional paid-for subscriptions for services focused on cyber protection.</p> <p>IPS has over 120,000 members and we are keen to help you ensure that Ofcom’s 2022/23 Plan of Work addresses their needs and concerns. Nuisance and scam calls remain one of our members’ biggest causes of irritation and concern.</p> <p>We have both read the proposed Plan and joined the webinar held on 24th January with interest. We are pleased that Ofcom has committed to continue to tackle nuisance calls and scams (2.17). However, we feel there are some areas in which more can be done to protect consumers, including our members, and which we would like to see specifically referenced in the final Plan</p> <p><u>Investigation and Enforcement</u></p> <p>1. <u>Telecoms Providers</u></p> <p>Nuisance messages and calls: Action plan update 2021 shows that in 2020 just 6 telecoms firms were investigated regarding their provision of numbers which were associated with nuisance calling. Only one investigation led to “...the withdrawal of suballocated numbers by the telecoms company from the company generating the nuisance calls”.</p> <p>We feel that greater resources and energy should be allocated to monitoring and investigating the non-compliant and fraudulent</p>

use of the telephony network. Telecoms firms are responsible for giving nuisance and scam callers access to the network, so they should be required to regulate this function far better. The threat of both Ofcom investigation and enforcement action needs to be made real.

2. Nuisance and Scam Callers

Our analysis suggests that nearly half of all ICO enforcement fines relating to live calling include references to firms' inappropriate use of Calling Line Identification (CLI) numbers. The ICO's enforcement notices vary in the level of detail they provide, so the actual proportion is probably higher still. We believe that the deterrent effect on firms carrying out nuisance and scam calling, underpinned by misleading, un-dialable and perpetually changing CLIs would be increased if Ofcom also investigated and acted against them, in parallel with the ICO.

Ongoing dialogue with IPS Members highlights a weakness in the penetration of information and consumers' awareness of its existence. We believe that there are a significant number of citizens who are blind to the amount of information that they are expected to consume, with the effect of important and empowering information getting lost in the 'noise'.

A greater effort is required to ensure that information is not just available, but is tested for its reach and impact.

VoIP and CLIs – Managing the 'End of Copper'

1. Consumers

On the 24 January webinar several contributors highlighted the need for the 'end of copper' and transition to VoIP to be carefully managed to protect the public – especially vulnerable, older, and less digitally aware consumers. We wholeheartedly agree and additionally recognise that scammers will almost certainly seek to exploit any guidance communications to take advantage of consumers, especially the most vulnerable.

We would be happy to assist Ofcom and its other stakeholders in addressing this challenge.

2. Technology

Ofcom recognises that VoIP makes the faking or spoofing of Calling Line Identification (CLI) numbers much easier, which is a gift to scammers. In the USA the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has already put mandatory number authentication (using the STIR/SHAKEN technique) in place to protect consumers.

What preparatory plans does Ofcom have in place to do the same once the switch from copper is completed? And in the interim is it possible to roll-out these techniques for those organisations that are using Voice Over IP already? These should be described in the Plan.

Postal Regulation

It seems conspicuous by its absence that there is no mention of Junk Mail and the lack of regulation enabling households to opt out of this economy. Many of our members cite the example that the junk is taken directly from the doormat to the recycling bin, with no consideration for what it contains.

Aside from the risk of potentially damaging personal data contained in discarded mailings, that there is no enforcement to permanently opt-out appears to be a failure in scope.

If Ofcom's regulatory aims include a focus on quality of service, sustainability and efficiency, this could be considered as having a positive environmental contribution, as well as allowing the resources of the Royal Mail to focus on metrics that matter for the universal postal service.