

Question 1 (g) - level of and basis for compensation

For missed appointments or appointments cancelled at less than 24 hours' notice, the compensation needs to be far higher than the £30 that I have heard mentioned.

And a flat payment means that once Openreach have failed to give 24 hours' notice, they have no incentive to mitigate the customers' loss by giving as much notice as possible. That needs fixing.

Openreach appointments are typically for the "half day", meaning that the customer needs to be on site for the whole of a five-hour window in which the engineer might appear. A £30 payment is well below even Minimum Wage for the wasted time if the customer hangs around waiting for an engineer who does not turn up.

If the engineer has no intention of attending, but Openreach fails to warn of this, then the customer has to wait around for the whole of the five hour window because they don't know that the engineer isn't coming. By contrast, even if the notice of non-attendance only comes half way through that window (eg when it is clear that the scheduled engineer won't finish the previous job in time), then the customer knows that they are free from the requirement to hang around for the rest of the appointment window.

You therefore need to provide an incentive for Openreach to warn of a no-show as soon as they know that it will (or is highly likely) to happen.

I would propose the customer be entitled to £25 if given less than 24 hours' notice of a cancellation, plus £5 for every hour of the appointment window until they are informed that the appointment will not be met. So a complete no-show (with no notification at all) would see compensation of £50; an appointment cancelled less than 24 hours ahead, but before the appointment window starts would see compensation of £25, and an appointment cancelled two hours into an appointment window would see compensation of £35.

I would also suggest that where the appointment relates to a business line (for which customers pay a higher rate than residential), missed appointments should be at a higher rate. Businesses often have to pay for external contractors to be present during Openreach appointments, and the cost of a missed appointment is potentially massively higher than £30.

I wasted five hours at a charity's office waiting for an Openreach no-show a while back – I needed to be onsite to supervise installation and check that connected equipment worked OK afterwards. Had I been charging the charity for my time, they would have faced the cost of five hours on site, plus travel time and charges: perhaps £250. A £30 compensation payment would be completely inadequate in such circumstances.

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