

Reference: 01672374

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

10 October 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the replacement of landline telephones. Your request was received on 19 September 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request & our response

“Can you answer me these queries please re bt landline telephones

1. i have heard that domestic customer landline phones are being replaced, is this correct.?”

Landline phone calls have traditionally been delivered over the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). The decision to retire the PSTN has been taken by the UK’s telecommunications industry because this network is becoming more difficult and expensive to maintain. In the future, all landline calls will be delivered over digital technology which works over a broadband connection, called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). You might also see this referred to as ‘digital phone’ or ‘digital voice’.

BT has taken the decision to retire the PSTN by December 2025 and other providers using the same legacy technology as BT are following a broadly similar timescale. The process of PSTN switch-off is being led by industry and has already started.

See our [advice page](#) for more information.

“2. it is said that in future to call/recieve messages these customers will need a computer link in the home is this correct?”

VoIP calls are delivered over a broadband connection, so once the PSTN has been retired, customers who wish to retain a landline will need a broadband connection to their property to move over to a VoIP phone service.

BT is the main provider of telephone services to customers who only have a landline. [BT said](#) that “customers without broadband will not be switched to a digital landline until they are able to. BT will install new equipment in the local telephone exchange that will allow customers to use their phone

in the same way as they do today. This temporary solution will keep customers connected until they are able to make the switch to digital voice.”

“3. if the above are correct what is the financial benefit to the customer?”

Both BT and Virgin Media O2 said they provide a VoIP service to customers at no extra cost than their current service.

“4. and what does an bt customer do if they have no computer?”

BT customers do not need a computer to use their landline. While VoIP services work over a broadband connection, in the vast majority of cases, BT customers can still use their existing telephone handset. The handset will simply plug in to the back of their broadband router rather than the phone socket on the wall. There is no requirement for anyone to own or purchase a computer in order to use a VoIP service.

BT has a [video](#) explaining the move to a digital landline for a customer, and the help BT provides.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner’s Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF