

Stakeholder responses to the implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive through the Consumer Contracts (information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013

As well as ongoing consultation across business and consumer groups, two formal consultations have been undertaken. The first, in November 2008, gathered views on the European Commission's proposal for a Consumer Rights Directive. This informed the UK Government's views throughout negotiations to ensure that the Directive agreed provided a fair and effective framework for business whilst maintaining high levels of consumer protection.

In August 2012 BIS issued a further consultation seeking views on the scope of the Directive, and those provisions in the Directive where we had options with regard to implementation. Comments were also sought on whether there were aspects or drafting in the Directive where stakeholders would welcome further clarity. 66 responses were received.¹

The Government then sought detailed views on the draft Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, which will implement the Directive, between 6 August and 11 October 2013. A total of 35 responses were received, including 22 representing business views, seven representing consumer views, and six representing other groups, including local authorities, legal representatives and individuals. In addition, a number of stakeholder meetings were held to discuss the draft Regulations, including a roundtable on the provision relating to contacting a trader by telephone, attended by business and consumer groups, regulators and representatives from the telecoms industry.

The Government is very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to contribute. The information and comments received have been used to amend and finalise the Regulations which will implement the Directive.² A summary of views received is set out below, together with a short explanation of the Government's response to the comments received. For ease of reference, where the numbering of the final Regulations differs from the draft on which we consulted, this is indicated below.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/226628/bis-13-1108-misleading-and-aggressive-practices_reponses-to-the-commissions-recommendations.pdf ² https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/providing-better-information-and-protection-for-consumers/supporting-pages/implementing-the-consumer-rights-directive-2011-83-eu

Draft Regul- ation number	Final Regul- ation number	Торіс	Views of business and business representatives	Views of consumer representatives	Other views
4	4	Definition of "Consumer" and "trader"	-	Clarification was sought on the definition of trader.	-
	nt Respons ations have		ovide further clarification.		
5	5	Other definitions		Request for clarification of some definitions.	Request for clarification of some definitions.
Governme	nt Respons	se:			
Examples	are provide	ed in guidance to help	clarify definitions.		
6	6	Limits on application: general	Some respondents felt it is unnecessary to extend the Regulations to cover sectors, where sector specific legislation exists.	-	Several respondents believe Regulation 6(1)(c) needs clarification, as significant rogue trading occurs in the construction of and the repairs of immovable property.
	nt Respons will provide		on from the Regulations for imm	novable property.	
7	7	Application of Part 2	Some respondents felt package travel should be covered by limited specified rules, eg those regarding	-	-

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			prominence for obligations to pay in the same way as passenger transport services.		
			Some respondents favour £40 as the minimum limit of applicability for off-premises contracts, for reasons of simplicity, while others favour the maximum threshold allowed, to ease the regulatory burden on off- premises sales businesses.		
Governme	ent Respons	e:			
the Europe	ean Commis		ge Travel Directive. The Govern	n a European Directive and is the subje ment therefore believes it not appropria	
The Gove	rnment has	decided to apply the n	naximum threshold of £42 to mir	nimise the burdens on business.	
8	8	Making information etc available to the consumer	Further clarity was sought on the phrase 'average consumer'.	Further clarity was sought on the phrase 'average consumer'.	One respondent highlights that the term 'average consumer' appears once in the draft Regulations

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					without explanation. They suggest that the Regulations cross-refer to the concept of the 'average consumer' in the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.
Governme	ent Respons	ie:	I		
Reference	es to the 'ave	erage consumer' have	been removed and replaced w	ith the concept of 'reasonable exp	pectation'.
9	9	Information to be	A number of respondents		
		provided before making an on- premises contract	support the exemption for day to day transactions, while others sought further clarity on the definition of day to day transactions.		Several respondents agree that day-to-day transactions need to be either clarified in the Regulations or examples need to be given as guidance.

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					available' whereas the Directive requires information to be 'provided' or 'given'.
Governmei	nt Respons	e:			
closely refle	ect the Dire	ective wording.	idance. Amendments have be	een made with regard to the 'mak	ing available' of information to more
10	10	Information to be provided before			One respondent believes that face to face off-
		making an off- premises contract			premises doorstep contracts must only be given on paper to avoid the targeting of vulnerable consumers.

consumer specifically agrees to have it on another durable medium. The Government believes that the enforceability of contracts is clear.

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12	12	Provision of copy or confirmation of off-premises contracts	One respondent thought the wording of Regulation 12(1) is unclear and does not fully match the wording of the Directive.	-	One respondent thought all off-premises confirmations should be provided on paper, rather than on a 'durable medium'.
	ent Respons				i
The Regu	lations have	e been amended to ens	sure consistency with the Direct	ive.	
13	13	Information to be provided before making a distance contract	Several respondents thought the requirement for a personalised cancellation form immediately available to download would cause problems and that an 'unequivocal statement' by the consumer, or an easy-to- complete cancellation form, immediately available for download should be sufficient.	-	-

Government Response:

The Regulations have been amended to make clear that a cancellation form in a durable medium does not have to be provided until after a distance contract is made.

		representatives	-	
16	Confirmation of distance contracts	A number of respondents believe the requirement for confirmation to be provided in a durable medium before the download can begin prevents consumers receiving digital content quickly and efficiently.	-	-
ions have	been amended so that Offences related to the failure to give notice of the right to cancel	at in the case of digital content t Some commented that businesses should be given appropriate time to implement the changes proposed.	he confirmation must be provided	within a reasonable time. One respondent said that in the interests of clarity and consistency, this offence should be widened to include non-notification of a consumer's right to cancel under a distance contract. They wanted to see a time limit of offences extended to match those of the Consumer Protection
	Respons ons have	distance contracts Response: ons have been amended so the 19 Offences related to the failure to give notice of the	distance contractsbelieve the requirement for confirmation to be provided in a durable medium before the download can begin prevents consumers receiving digital content quickly and efficiently.Response:ons have been amended so that in the case of digital content to to the failure to give notice of the right to cancelSome commented that businesses should be given appropriate time to implement the changes	distance contractsbelieve the requirement for confirmation to be provided in a durable medium before the download can begin prevents consumers receiving digital content quickly and efficientlyResponse:ons have been amended so that in the case of digital content the confirmation must be provided19Offences related to the failure to give notice of the right to cancelSome commented that businesses should be given appropriate time to implement the changes

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the Directi exploitatio	ve, and the n by rogue	ere is no scope to dela traders than those but	ay implementation. Regarding th	e offence, consumers buying off- esence of the trader). The Goverr	
23	24	Powers of investigation		-	One respondent thought the use of the term "if required" in Regulation 23(5) differed from other recent legislation containing powers for Trading Standards and needed to be amended.
	nt Respons		t and to ansure consistency the	reference to "if required" bee been	a removed
The Gove	nment agre		it and to ensure consistency the	reference to "if required" has beer	Tremoved.
24	25	Obstruction of authorised officers	-	-	Some respondents thought that making the fine for obstruction level 3 would not provide sufficient incentive to deter obstruction of Trading Standards officers.
Governme	nt Respons	se:			Standards officers.

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			ave consistency in obstruction of the Draft Consumer Rights Bill.	ffence fines across consumer legislation	The approach and rationale
27	28	Limits of application: circumstances excluding cancellation			Respondents suggested the exemption for "the supply of non-prefabricated goods that are made on the basis of individual choice" is too broad and ambiguous.
			-	_	There was concern that the provision that exempts <i>"services related to leisure</i> <i>activities"</i> needs further consideration to clarify which services are intended to be exempt.
					The exception from cancellation rights for goods which have been 'according to their nature, inseparably mixed with other items after delivery' is directed at goods such

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-consumer-rights-bill

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					as fuel delivered into household tanks, but was thought unclear whether this would also be extended to installed goods.
Sovernme	nt Respons	se:			
The Gover	nment has	noted these commer	nts, and the Regulations and guid	lance have been amended to take	e account of them.

The Government agrees that it is important that the Regulations do not impede quicker switching between energy suppliers. The Regulations do not prevent consumers proceeding with a switch to another supplier during the cooling off period, provided they have given their consent. Further explanation has been provided in guidance.

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30	31	Cancellation period extended for breach of information requirement	There was concern that to comply with the Regulation, traders would have to set out details of both the statutory Regulations, and their own more generous period for cancellation of the contract. Some felt that to prevent confusion, the information requirement set out in Schedule 2 should be superseded where a trader's own policy gives a consumer greater rights than is required by the Directive.	-	
The guida back perio include reo	d, do not al quirements	clear that more genero lso have to set out info mandated under the R	rmation about the statutory 14 d	nesses which offer more generous te ay cancellation period. However, if t clear and information must be given a	he favourable terms do not about those points.
31	32	Exercise the right to withdraw or			Some respondents said they would like greater

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	ormation is	given in guidance.	1		
33		Reimbursement by trader in the event of withdrawal or cancellation	Several respondents called for greater clarity on deduction for use.	Respondents did not believe the careful removing of packaging should permit a trader to make a reduction to the refund in the event of cancellation.	Some felt the Regulation should more specifically describe the extent to which consumers should be able to test and inspect the goods. There is the suggestion that examples should be provided of what constitutes reasonable handling.
	ent Respons lations have		urther information is given in guid	ance.	
34	35	Return of goods in the event of cancellation	Some respondents believed the Regulation went beyond the requirements of the Directive. The argument put forward was that it is reasonable, that if a trader is transparent about the costs a consumer would bear if they accept a	Some felt the Regulations should clarify that consumers cannot be prevented from returning goods for which they no longer have the packaging.	Respondents said they would like clarification that there will be a statutory and/or contractual duty for the trader to refund the costs to the consumer reasonably incurred in returning the goods in the event of cancellation.
			trader's offer to collect goods the trader should be able to charge for the service.		It is believed the wording of the Regulation allows unscrupulous traders to specify a return address outside the UK; this

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					obligates the consumer to return it at significant international postal cost.
Governme	nt Respons	se:			
The Gover	mment has	noted these commen	ts, and the Regulations and guid	ance have been amended.	
Guidance	also addres	sses whether traders	can make deductions to any refu	in the same position as customers insp nd if damage to packaging means the	goods cannot be resold.
35	36	Provision of service in cancellation period	Many respondents were concerned the requirement, for distance contracts, for consumers to express consent in a durable medium for a service to start before the end of the cancellation period will result in the delay in provision of services to consumers, where previously consumers were able to express consent online or by phone.	One respondent said guidance should be provided to clarify how a consumer can make an "express request".	There was concern that this Regulation may lead to unsolicited callers persuading/coercing consumers to make an "express request" for a service to start before the end of the cancellation period. There was a view that website confirmation falls outside the definition of durable medium.

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Governme	nt agrees th		r express consent to be made in	rvice to start before the end of the cano a durable medium for distance contrac	
36	37	Provision of digital content in cancellation period	Several respondents thought the requirement for consumers to express consent, for the provision of digital content to start before the end of the cancellation period, in a durable medium will prevent consumers from enjoying instant digital consumption. Respondents thought the Regulation should be altered to allow consent through in-service confirmation or other appropriate medium.	-	-
The Regu		been amended to ref	lect these comments. Guidance trader has told them this and obt	e will also make clear that consumers w tained explicit consent.	/ill not have a right to cancel
37	38	Effects of	Clarity was sought on who is	-	-

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		withdrawal or cancellation on ancillary contracts	liable for cancelling ancillary contracts in the event that the main contract is terminated by either consumer or trader.		
	ent Respons		contract is automatically termin	antad if a consumer cancele a contrar	t and the trader is responsible
			contract of the termination witho	nated if a consumer cancels a contrac ut undue delay.	
38	40	Additional payments under a contract	While the majority of the respondents were supportive of restricting additional		Several respondents thought the restriction on additional payments should
			payments, many thought there needed to be		also apply to package travel and timeshare
			exemptions. Many thought small opt-out charitable donations should be		contracts to avoid confusion to consumers and businesses.
			exempted, some were concerned the Regulation will result in fewer holiday		
			makers purchasing travel insurance, and some were		
			concerned that distinction needs to be made between additional payments and		
			extra payments required to		

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			enable the main service desired by the consumer, i.e. line rental charges to enable provision of broadband services.		
Governme	nt Respons	e:	•		
areas to di	verge from	the Directive. It is the	0	ective is subject to maximum harmonisa naritable donations. Businesses will of c payment.	
European	Directive ar	nd is the subject of a ne	ew proposal from the European	ge travel sector is subject to sector-spe Commission for a new Package Travel I at this time within the scope of these F	Directive. The Government
39	41	Charges for communication by telephone	A large number of respondents supported the intention of charging basic rate for customer helplines. A significant number commented that a 'copy out' approach, supported by guidance, would ensure	Many respondents agreed that basic rate should equate to geographic rate. Many respondents felt that all numbers that allowed revenue sharing should be excluded from the definition of basic rate.	Most respondents did not believe passenger transport services should be excluded. With no standard definition of basic rate, some suggested that basic rate be defined as telephone
			flexibility in a rapidly evolving market. Some respondents called for basic rate to be defined as	A large number of respondents saw no reason for excluding passenger transport services (as the Directive does, from most measures).	numbers where the trader does not receive financial benefits.

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			all non-premium rate numbers.		
			Some respondents expressed concern over the timing of this measure, in relation to OFCOM's ongoing reforms. Concern was also expressed over the speed of implementation.		
			Some respondents argued that consumers would pay more to call a geographic rate number than, for example an 0845 number, particularly if calling from a pre-paid mobile.		
			Several respondents pointed out that, as currently drafted, the draft Regulations would prohibit the use of 0800 numbers for customer helplines.		
			Some respondents argued that businesses would decrease use of helplines and move to an internet-		

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			based customer service model. Some respondents argued that the Government's		
			impact assessment underestimated the costs of changing telephone numbers.		

Government Response:

The Government has carefully considered these comments, and discussed this issue in detail with a wide range of stakeholders including OFCOM.

The Government agrees with comments that specifying the detail of this reform in the Regulations could lead to unintended consequences, in particular a detailed provision specifying the types of numbers covered may not adequately keep pace with a rapidly evolving telecoms market. Therefore the Regulations have been amended to 'copy out' the Directive, which means that a 'basic rate' telephone call charge is not defined in legislation. However, the vast majority of stakeholders thought that the Government should specify what 'basic rate' means in a UK context in order to aid compliance. The Government is therefore explaining in guidance the definition of 'basic rate'.

The Government has also considered the balance of arguments in relation to whether revenue sharing telephone numbers (those that permit an element of the cost of the call to be passed to the trader either in financial payment or by way of services provided by a telecoms provider) are compatible with the 'basic rate'. The vast majority of respondents agreed that premium rate telephone numbers are not compatible with the concept of 'basic rate'. The vast majority also believed that geographic rate and free-to-caller numbers such as 0800 numbers should be compatible with 'basic rate'. Free-to-caller telephone numbers can be charged in certain circumstances and these are also the subject of future OFCOM reforms. The Government agrees with the views expressed by the majority of respondents in relation to premium rate, geographic rate and free-to-caller telephone numbers and has set out this position in the guidance published alongside the Regulations. There was no consensus on whether non-premium rate, revenue sharing numbers are compatible with the 'basic rate'. The Government has

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listened carefully to the arguments put forward both for and against. The Government is mindful that the charges for such revenue sharing numbers can vary and that they can be below geographic call rates in certain circumstances. They are also subject to future OFCOM reforms, which the Government has also considered as well as the charging regime as it applies today. However, the Government is also minded that traders cannot control the circumstances that would mean consumers being charged above geographic rates and consumers may not understand if or how they could avoid paying higher charges. The Government therefore does not consider that revenue sharing numbers meet the definition of 'basic rate' in relation to these Regulations.

The Government has also considered carefully the comments made in relation to speed and cost of transition. In particular, several responses believed that the OFCOM analysis of costs of telephone number changes, which is also used in part of the analysis in the Government Impact Assessment, indicated the assessment costs were significantly underestimated. The Government has re-examined the analysis it has undertaken as well as the use of the OFCOM costing figures. The Government does not believe it has significantly underestimated the costs of its proposals. In particular:

- The business population using non-geographic numbers in the OFCOM analysis is likely to be grossly conservative in this context as it will include businesses that operate business-to-business transactions (which are out of scope of the Directive);
- Using the OFCOM population numbers would assume that all businesses change their telephone numbers, while the emphasis is on post-sales numbers that may be affected by this Directive.

There were some queries as to whether the Government Impact Assessment had included wider costs associated with after care consumer material, such as updating terms and conditions, consumer contracts, leaflets/brochures, promotional material and other literature with contact information details including the telephone contact number. This element had been costed, based on a survey of businesses commissioned by BIS to investigate proposed consumer legislative reforms.⁴

Although not unanimous agreement, the Government is persuaded by the balance of responses to the draft Regulations and is extending this provision to the passenger transport sector. However, the Regulations will not extend to package travel arrangements as this falls in scope of the current proposal from the European Commission for a new Package Travel Directive.

40	44	Complaints	-	-	Several respondents were

⁴ Link to IFF survey.

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Governme The Regul	ent Respons ations have	been amended to tak	e account of these comments, a	and an enforcement authority no	concerned the requirement for an enforcement authority to provide reasons for whether or not it plans to make an application for an injunction would divert the limited resources of enforcers away from more serious enforcement cases.
43	18	Consumer's right to redress	Issues were raised over the link with 14(5) and whether contraventions of Regulations 14(5) should be treated differently from contraventions of	-	-
			Regulations 38 and 39.		

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Regulatior change ha	n 14(5), it w is not been	ould not be appropriat	e to introduce a contractual rem	ions provided that there would be edy, to mirror Regulations 38 and vide a refund if Regulation 14(5)	
	Sched- ule 2	Information relating to distance and off- premises contracts	Several respondents thought the requirement to provide the information in Schedule 2 in a 'durable medium' is inappropriate for digital content, as technical information is liable to change and information provided by email/post will quickly go out of date.		One respondent was concerned the Regulation may result in traders committing an offence for entering into an off premises contract with a consumer by not providing the information set out in paragraphs (I), (m) or (n).
Governme			One respondent asked for further guidance on how much of the contact information in Schedule 2(c) must be provided by a trader to meet the requirement for compliance.		

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		are signing up for whe Id about this when ma	, , ,	mportant to the consumer is likely to cha	ange (cost, nature of product
consumers message t	in the hom	e, some of whom may actices are not accepta	be particularly vulnerable to hig able. Of course our enforcemen	s an offence and reflects the Governme gh pressure sales tactics, is a priority. V t bodies will work with those traders wh sure they understand the rules and abid	Ve want to send the o, acting in good faith,
Sched- ule 3	Sched- ule 3	Information about the exercise of the right to cancel	One respondent would like it stated that a trader is not obliged to use the exact wording of the form and would like clarification that a trader can give the consumer a longer cooling off period if they so wish.	One respondent thought aspects of the Schedule required redrafting to aid clarity.	-
The form n more gene period. Ho	rous terms, wever, if th	d as set out. However, such as a 28 day mor	ney back period, do not also hav not include requirements mand	more generous terms are permissible. ve to set out information about the statu ated under the Regulations, this must b	tory 14 day cancellation

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