

Industry Code of Practice

Special Service Restoration

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1 Introduction

Most special service providers have already taken proactive steps to ensure their services will continue to function normally when re-routed over a VOIP-based service, but it is possible that a very small percentage of such services will cease to function following the switch, because of a compatibility issue.

In the circumstances where an End User has migrated from a copper-based voice service (e.g. with CP1) to a new VOIP-based service with another CP (e.g. CP2), and subsequently discovers that their 'special service' no longer works, this Code of Practice provides industry-agreed guidance for those CP Retailers who may encounter this difficult situation.

2 Scope

This Code of Practice is primarily concerned with ensuring the End User experience is managed sensitively & promptly by the Gaining CP (i.e. CP2), with particular emphasis on the following requirements: -

- the urgent need to restore the End User's special service as a matter of priority and, separately,
- to accommodate the End User's desire to subsequently switch to a new VOIP-based service with an alternative CP (e.g. CP3), if they so wish.

Openreach have established a standalone 'SSR' (special service restoration) process which CPs should use to initiate the prompt restoration of a failed 'special service' via a new copper-based voice service.

(insert hot link to OR portal)

This Code of Practice will only apply in those circumstances where the End User's 'special service' has been categorised by the Gaining CP (i.e. CP2) as 'critical'.

3 Retailer guidance

3.1 Pre-VOIP service order qualification

At point of sale (i.e. Online, Sales Agent, Retail outlet), the End User should be asked to confirm if they have a special service which needs to be retained as part of their switch to a new VOIP-based service.

If the End User confirms the existence of a special service the Gaining CP (i.e. CP2) should advise them to consult their special service provider to confirm compatibility with a VOIP-based service, before placing their order.

3.2 Special service restoration (SSR)

Following delivery of their new VOIP-based service, for the reason explained above, there is a very small chance that the End User's special service has ceased to function because it is not compatible with their new VOIP-based service.

As soon as the End User becomes aware that their special service is not working, they will report the problem to their new CP (i.e. CP2) and ask for it to be restored as soon as possible.

3.3 *SSR – Process Qualification criteria*

Once the End User has notified their new CP (i.e. CP2) of the problem, CP2 should complete the following steps: -

Advise the End User to immediately notify their special service provider of the situation (assuming they haven't done so already) to see if they can resolve the compatibility issue, negating the need to revert to a copper-based voice service.

Assuming the special service provider is unable to resolve the problem, the Gaining CP should determine if the special service is categorised as 'critical'.

A special service will be categorised as 'critical' if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria; -

- Critical/Chronic Health surveillance (e.g. Life threatening, Critical health support dependency)
- Required by Law Enforcement agencies (e.g. Custodial tagging)

Subject to satisfying the above criteria, CP2 should trigger the Openreach special service restoration process. (*insert hot link to OR portal*)

The Openreach 'special service restoration' process will enable CP2 to expedite the provision of a 'copper-based' voice service (including any associated broadband service) enabling the End User's special service to be restored in short order.

CP2 should make no attempt to direct (or force) the End User to move back to their original CP (i.e. CP1).

3.4 *Non-critical special service*

If the failed special service is deemed to be 'non-critical' (e.g. Home security), the End User should be advised to report the problem to their special service provider and ask that they address the compatibility issue, or otherwise approach an alternative special service provider.

3.5 *Consumer Contracts Regulations*

Depending on the type of special service provided, it is possible that the End User may not become immediately aware that their special service has ceased to function, and for this reason, may not actually report the problem for a number of days/weeks following delivery of their new VOIP-based service.

In such circumstances, where the End User has belatedly discovered an issue with their special service & it is categorised as critical, the 14-day cancellation period allowed under current Consumer Contracts Regulations, may well have elapsed.

Once the problem is reported, whenever that might be, CP2 should immediately initiate the SSR process & not hold the End User to any minimum service contract terms associated with the new VOIP service.

Additionally, CP2 may apply their own discretion regarding the End User's liability for any usage charges incurred during the period in question'

4 Subsequent steps

Once the End User's services (i.e. Voice, BB & special service) have been successfully restored, CP2 should advise the End User that they are at liberty to move to any other CP (i.e. CP3) of their own choice at any point in the future & will not be held to any minimum service contract terms if they choose to do so.

CP2 should explain to the End User that, if they choose to switch to another CP (i.e. CP3), they do not need to cease their existing services as this will be managed on their behalf by their new CP (i.e. CP3)....but.....they should be advised to make their chosen CP aware of their special service needs to avoid a repeat of their previous negative experience.

5 Consumer Switching

Notwithstanding all of the above, Gaining CP Retailers should otherwise progress End User requests to switch their services to them, in accordance with the Consumer Switching - Best Practice Guide

<http://www.offta.org.uk/files/Industry%20BPG-Consumer%20Switching.pdf>