

## Concept and Aims of One Touch Switch

### Background

In September 2021, Ofcom [confirmed](#) its decision to require providers to develop and operate one single new 'One Touch Switch' (OTS) process for all residential customers who will be switching landline and broadband services. The aim is to improve competition and give greater consumer confidence around moving from one provider to another.

The process will be Gaining Provider Led (GPL) and also include the removal of the existing Notification of Transfer (NoT) process. A further consultation on changes to the relevant General Conditions to implement these changes was included.

Under Ofcom's ruling, ITSPs supplying services to residential consumers were required to have processes and systems in place by the **3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023** in order to implement the OTS process. This deadline was not achieved, with both industry and The One Touch Switching Company (TOTSCo) consistently telling Ofcom that this target date was never realistic. In April 2023, the regulator [opened](#) an industry-wide enforcement programme to:

- Closely monitor the progress of providers
- Ensure all developments required for implementation continue at pace
- Make sure that OTS is delivered quickly, to the standard agreed with industry

### TOTSCo: Background and progress

After Ofcom's September 2021 decision, industry took it upon itself to design a solution to ensure that providers would be in compliance with the new regulations. Whilst this was initially led by the Office of the Telecommunications Adjudicator (OTA2), [TOTSCo](#) was established in June 2022 to take responsibility for the development and operation of the messaging platform that would deliver the necessary OTS switching solution for industry.

It is a not-for-profit organisation owned by members, whose board members were appointed to reflect various industry constituencies – Infrastructure, Business and Retail. Nick Holland, who is a Board member of Comms Council UK, is one of TOTSCo's Business Constituency Directors, and his role is to represent the business community within this process.

### Background to the TOTSCo Hub

TOTSCo's process to develop the 'TOTSCo Hub' – the messaging hub that will carry customer details and other required data and messages between the gaining and losing providers – was launched in October. The idea is that this will manage the exchange of three pairs of messages between gaining and losing providers:

1. Matching customer details so gaining providers identify end user details
2. Ordering switching to take place, with acknowledgement from the losing provider
3. Confirming switching completion.

The industry process and API specification was provided to a number of potential vendors, and Tech Mahindra was selected who are now developing the hub systems.

In March, TOTSCo sent out a draft user agreement, enabling people to scrutinise what signing up to the Hub would legally look like. TOTSCo is also in the process of creating a communications group to liaise with stakeholders about the switch externally.

Providers of fixed voice and broadband services who believe that they are, or may be, affected by these new regulations should [register with this website](#). Registration is free and does not lead to an obligation to use the services of the TOTSCo Hub.

### **Relevance to Comms Council UK members**

OTS is a legal requirement only for providers that supply services to residential consumers. While Ofcom does not discourage business providers from using the OTS process where possible – to create a more lined-up switching approach – it is not compelled due to the various complexities of business requirements.

At the same time, the lines have become relatively blurred in terms of what constitutes a ‘business’ or ‘residential’ customer for certain services. This is not related to the ways that customers use their provider, but the type of contract they have. For example, if a residential consumer buys a business service for speed purposes, their current supplier will *not* be required to consume OTS if a business contract is signed. This is an important distinction to make, and Comms Council UK members must ensure they are aware which process certain consumers fall under.

### **Business requirements**

While OTS isn’t compulsory for business consumers, they must follow an industry-agreed Gaining Provider Led (GPL) process for fixed voice and broadband switching.

In order to facilitate this requirement, the Gaining Provider Led Business Steering Group (GPLB-SG) was formed to put this process in place. The group encompasses representation from participating providers (facilitated by the OTA), which Comms Council UK has continued to play an active role in.

Ofcom has defined that suppliers of Number Based Internet Communication (NBICs) or Internet Access Service (IAS) provided at a fixed location – where that switch does not involve a change in location – are in scope of OTS for residential customers.

### **GPLB-SG progress**

- Available on the [FCS website](#), the Steering Group drafted business switching principles to underpin the process, and has engaged with Ofcom to introduce the work the group is doing.
- Also accessible via [FCS](#), a sub-grouping within the GPLB-SG, the Design Drafting Group, has written initial documents outlining business switching requirements, and has asked for feedback from industry, which members of Comms Council UK have commented on.
- These documents include:
  - Business Switching Principles for Industry V4.0
  - Gaining Provider Led Business Switching Industry Design Process V1.0
  - Business Switching Process Design V1.5
  - GPLB Process Steps Rationale v0.2

### **Next steps from GPL-SG and TOTSCo**

- GPL-SG will follow-up from the initial business switching bulletin with additional information on progress.

- TOTSCo will:
  - prepare for testing to take place later this year
    - From October to November 2023, end-to-end testing is scheduled, and TOTSCo has engaged with the Gaining Provider Led Steering Group to organise this, alongside test harnessing in late July.
  - Verify that there are third party providers who are willing to provide portal type access to the Hub
  - Ensure all retail CPs are prepared for the switchover from NoT+ to OTS