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OFCOM'S NEW CONSUMER PROTECTION POWERS WOULD GIVE THE REGULATOR BITE

Ofcom has today outlined new consumer protection powers which could soon boost its abilities to tackle scams and mis-selling. With the proposed rules – which are now before Parliament – Ofcom could fine a company as soon as any rule breach was discovered. This fine could be up to ten per cent of relevant turnover.

Ernest Doku, technology expert at uSwitch.com, comments: “These proposed changes to Ofcom’s powers and responsibilities would give them real teeth, forcing providers to be more transparent regarding on-going issues such as net neutrality, as well as sharing network infrastructures. The ability to issue hefty fines would certainly put the fear into companies believed to be guilty of mis-selling or engaging in underhand practices.

“The introduction of a minimum broadband speed is particularly good news for consumers, who often feel left in the slow lane, even if they signed up to a speedy service. Despite average speeds increasing from 5.7Mb to 7.4Mb, our research shows that satisfaction with speed has fallen from 71% to 68% as customers sign up to faster speeds than they actually receive. There is also a widening gap in satisfaction with speed between providers.

“But although setting call charge limits and ensuring a minimum broadband speed and quality of service are significant for improving offerings to consumers, Ofcom may be straying into waters reserved for providers by wielding these discretionary powers too freely.

“However, consumers should be celebrating if these proposals get the thumbs up from the government. We’ll have to wait for their decision regarding changes to the EU EC Framework, set for the 26th of May.”

For more information visit www.uswitch.com or call 0800 093 0607

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For further information please contact:

Katherine Cooper, uSwitch.com on 020 7802 2961 or katherinecooper@uswitch.com

Stuart Lerman, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3674 or stuartl@lansons.com

John Diviney, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3696 or johnd@lansons.com

About Us:

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uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email CustomerServices@uswitch.com or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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