TOTSCo Bulletin No.54
Date: 25 April 2024
Subject: Guidance on Fixed Wireless Access (FWA)

This bulletin has been written by the One Touch Switch Industry Process Group (IPG) to provide additional guidance on switching of Fixed Wireless Access (FWA), following queries received from industry. The Message Examples document has been updated to v1.1 to include an additional example of a match confirmation where the underlying service is FWA.

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TOTSCo
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Guidance on Fixed Wireless Access

Fixed Wireless Access (FWA)

The Ofcom rules around OTS state that it applies to all residential customers switching services provided at a fixed location, **regardless of technology**. Ofcom explicitly mentioned FWA as being in scope.[1] [2]

The term FWA covers a number of technologies used for the full or final leg of delivery to the customer[3], including:

- Access over 4G or 5G mobile networks. Typically the CPE for such services has a data SIM which has a MSISDN starting with 447[4].
- Access over other forms of wireless, including point-to-point and point-to-multipoint microwave, mmWave, and via satellite.

The term "wireline" is not commonly used in OTS documentation, but is used here to mean access such as copper and full-fibre.

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[1] Paragraphs 4.7 and 4.13 of Ofcom's September 2021 statement and consultation

[2] Paragraph 3.18 of Ofcom's February 2022 statement

[3] For clarity, this is **not** referring to the backhaul network, and only refers the technology used for delivery into the customer's home. E.g. a FTTC service provided on an offshore island is a wireline service, even if there is a microwave link in backhaul to the mainland.

[4] MSISDN includes country code (44 for the UK) and national number, but does not include the "+" which indicates to customers to dial their international access code before the country code.

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FWA v mobile broadband

FWA is delivered to most locations using powered proprietary FWA equipment using outdoor-mounted CPE devices. In some cases, mobile technology based on 3G, 4G or 5G

equipment is used. In the latter cases, the CPE device might be indoor or outdoor-mounted and would have a SIM or eSIM installed. In either case, the connection would bypass any wired service to the property.

A service marketed as a "home broadband" service, typically requiring a main power supply, and intended to be used in a fixed location, would be FWA, and in scope of OTS switching. A mobile broadband device (e.g. a "MiFi" device) typically has an internal battery, is primarily intended to be used away from a fixed location, and would not be in scope.

Interaction with Mobile Auto-Switch

RCPs who offer FWA over 4G or 5G which is delivered using a national Mobile Network Operator's (MNO's) infrastructure may utilise the same BSS systems as other mobile access (mobile phones, mobile broadband etc). Their systems may enable the use of the "mobile auto-switch" processes) (PAC, STAC and INFO) for all MSISDNs, including those used for FWA and mobile broadband.

However, customers typically do not know the MSISDN associated with any 4G/5G FWA or mobile broadband[5], and would have no need to port their MSISDN using a PAC. So the use of auto-switch processes for these products is negligible – the support for porting of the MSIDN is more a side-effect of a shared BSS with generic functionality, rather than something expected to be utilised by customers.

There is no requirement on any RCP to completely prevent usage of auto-switch processes, but Ofcom have stated that they **must** support OTS for products which would reasonably be classified as FWA.

Bonded / integrated mobile backup

Some RCPs offer an integrated 4G/5G backup to their wireline service. Typically their router (or "hub") automatically switches over to the backup mobile service if there is a failure of the wireless access.

Such backup is usually positioned as an additional benefit of the primary wireline service – it would be the primary service that the customer would look to switch under OTS. The customer may seek a new provider with an equivalent service, or may decide that the additional cost of such a backup is not justified for them.

Other customers may choose to take a completely separate FWA service as their backup, not integrated with their primary service. This is more common for business customers –

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[5] The 447 MSISDN may be visible on the customer's bill, and may be used as the username for a self-service portal (both often in 07 format). But this is a not a number that the customer would use for calls, and accessing SMS messages usually require using the admin interface of the CPE.

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consumer customers are less likely to pay for two independent services. Such separate FWA <u>could</u> be switched under OTS as a primary service.

OTS matching and switching

An LRCP which offers FWA should be capable of successfully processing an OTS match request, with the following detail:

- If the FWA is provided over 4G or 5G, the LRCP <u>may</u> support use of their 447 MSISDN as an input service identifier in the match request, and <u>may</u> return it as a service identifier in the match response.
- None of the OTS documentation has defined any explicit service identifier types for use with FWA – but we have also not documented an exhaustive list of valid types – so it would be acceptable to use MSISDN as the type in the match response, when the underlying service has an associated MSISDN (e.g. 4G/5G).
- The NetworkOperator should **not** be returned as an access provider of wireline IAS (e.g. A001 for Openreach would make no sense). The LRCP may use a value from the ACP list[6] which sensibly represents a provider of wireless access (e.g. one of the UK MNOs).
- In general, NetworkOperator is of use when there is a possibility of an intra-network switch, to help the GRCP have confidence in requesting such a provision type. It is of less use where the only choice is provide and cease. NetworkOperator is not mandatory, so it can also be omitted from a match response.
- In general, service identifiers are of use when the network operator supports intra-network switches, and the identifiers can verify that the correct service is switched. For most FWA, and switch would be a provide and cease, so there is <u>no obligation</u> to return any service identifier for an FWA service.

Note: be wary of assuming that customers will only switch from one FWA to another FWA. E.g. consider that an alt-net rolls out their new full-fibre network, and a customer moves from FWA over 4G to full-fibre. Or a Wireless ISP rolls out their new FWA network, and a customer moves from ADSL to FWA.

An OTS switch order where the losing and / or gaining technology is FWA should be no different to switch orders from and to wired technologies.

Brand support

Ofcom stated that consumers should have "quick, easy and reliable" switching. RCPs who support both wireline and wireless under the same brand (e.g. EE, Airband, Quickline, Voneus, County, Wildanet) should only have a single RCPID (which represents the brand on the customer's bill), and the customer should only have to specify the brand that they know and recognise.

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[6] RCPs may also request TOTSCo to allocate an ACPID for an access provider that is missing from their list.

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