

MNP Status and Background

On 4th January 1999 Mobile Number Portability (MNP) was launched in the UK. For the first time mobile phone users were able to take their mobile number with them when changing mobile communications provider.

The process that made MNP possible took a cross industry team over 18 months to develop and although technically sound proved complex to implement throughout the Network Operators and Service Providers (SP).

The cross industry MNP group reviewed the process in mid 1999 as a result of the feedback received. It was agreed that the problems encountered since launch could not be overcome without a fundamental change to the MNP process. A small working group was set up to develop a new porting process in order to address these issues.

The new donor-led process aimed to more fully meet both customer and industry expectations by reducing the opportunities for the port action not to happen on the agreed day whilst reducing operational costs by using Internet web based solutions for communicating between SP's.

On 16 November 2006, Ofcom published a consultation – *“Review of General Condition 18 – Number Portability”* in which it noted that excessively long port lead times may discourage consumers from switching provider and therefore proposed shorter porting lead times for the Consumer process.

On 17 July 2007, Ofcom concluded its review by releasing a notification of modification to the General Condition 18 (July Decision) which required the porting lead times of the Consumer process to be reduced to 2 business days by no later than 31 March 2008. This change was put into effect on 18 March 2008. The revised Process Manual prepared by the OSG is available on the public part of the MNP OSG website (<http://www.mnposg.org.uk>)

On 17 July 2007 Ofcom published another consultation – *“Arrangements for porting phone numbers when customers switch supplier - A review of General Condition 18”* in which it considered a further reduction of the porting lead time (from 2 business days) to less than 2 hours and, in recognition of the low levels of consumer awareness of the right to port, a switch from the donor led process to a recipient led process.

On 29 November 2007, Ofcom released its concluding statement – *“Telephone number portability for consumers switching suppliers”* and a notification of modification to the General Condition 18 (November Decision) requiring the implementation of a near-instant (no more than 2 hours) recipient led Consumer porting process and establishment of a central database of ported mobile numbers for direct routing of calls to mobile numbers as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event, by 1 September 2009.

During 2008, UKPorting managed the preparation of the recipient-led new process needed to meet this new requirement. (see <http://www.ukporting.org.uk>).

Vodafone supported by BT, Telefonica-O2, Orange and T-Mobile appealed to the Competition Appeal Tribunal against the decision of the Office of Communications (“OFCOM”) to modify Part 1 and General Condition 18 of Part 2 of the General Conditions regarding number portability, as set out in Annex 2 to the concluding statement entitled “Telephone number portability for consumers switching suppliers” (“the Decision”), published on 29 November 2007.

In Judgement 1094 on 18 September the CAT found in favour of the appeal and remitted the whole matter to OFCOM for reconsideration. OFCOM has published two consultation documents in August 2009 on possible ways forward:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/gc18_mnp/

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/gc18_routing/

The current legal requirement for MNP is therefore still the version of General Condition 18 with the amendment published on 17 July 2007 to require two day porting using the donor led system. A consolidated version of GC18 is available in the following file:

Number portability is also under review by the Commission in the revision of the Universal Services Directive and the Commission is proposing that the time for porting should be limited to one day. This requirement will probably refer to the actions by the donor and allow the recipient more flexibility over the timing.

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