



# 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 a residential End User has migrated from a copper-based voice service with CP1 to a new VOIP-based service with 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 and promptly by the Gaining CP (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.

The details for Openreach's 'SSR' process are available on the Openreach web-site.

This Code of Practice will only apply in those circumstances where the End User's 'special service' has been categorised by the Gaining CP (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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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 (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 (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 the following criteria; -

- Critical/Chronic Health support dependency (e.g. remote patient surveillance, remote dialysis machine control/surveillance)

Subject to satisfying the above criteria, CP2 may trigger the Openreach special service restoration process.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> BT Group have made available a dedicated test-lab for Special Service Providers to proactively test their products against the new VOIP-based services. For further details go to <https://btplc.com/DigitalServicesLab/index.htm>

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

### 3.4 *Non-Critical Special Service*

If the failed special service is deemed to be non-critical (e.g. home security, custodial tagging), 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.

Failing this, where the End User (and their special service provider) are still unable to restore the special service, the End User can submit a normal request to have their telephone service restored back to a copper-based voice service. In these circumstances, the Service Provider should employ the most appropriate Business-as-Usual provisioning process (e.g. service re-grade, service transfer, service provide, etc)

### 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 and 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 and 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 Post Special Service Restoration - Subsequent Steps**

Following successful restoration, in the event that the End User subsequently decides to move to another CP (CP3) of their own choice, the End User will not be held to any minimum service contract terms.

CP2 should also explain to the End User that, if they subsequently decide to switch to another CP (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 Same CP Scenario – End User Regrade**

Where the End User encounters the same unfortunate loss of special service following a simple regrade from copper-based service delivery to a new VOIP-based service, the CP concerned should adopt the same approach as if they were the Gaining CP in a 'change of CP' migration scenario.

The CP concerned may only invoke the Openreach SSR process if the End User's special service satisfies the critical criteria specified above.

Following successful restoration, the position thereafter should be as outlined above in Section 4 – Subsequent Steps.

## **6 Consumer Switching – Business as Usual**

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

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