

This response was amended at the respondent's request.

Dear Sir/Madam.

Thank you for allowing me to share my concerns with regards to your consultation on the treatment of vulnerable customers. I have grave concerns regarding the telecommunications provider **[provider]**. I joined a public Facebook group **[provider]** complaints, and their customers are turning to us daily due to total frustration of not getting their complaints resolved, I am reading stories on a regular basis which quite frankly fill me with dread. This organisations systems are NOT fit for purpose. The elderly and disabled or anyone experiencing mental health problems are required to contact their foreign call centres when issues arise with their services , which causes a lot of distress due to the language barriers and also down to the fact that the call centre operatives do not recognise welfare cases and do not act on information provided by the account holder, this obviously causes a long delay in fixing any faults or issues, some rely on services due to having emergency alarms, so when this happens they are left feeling very frightened and isolated, they are also unable to contact family ,friends ,carers and any emergency services. There are cases where they have rung their foreign call centres and have been left on hold for a considerable amount of time to then have their calls dropped and having to start all over again, in some cases they are being shouted at and experiencing rudeness from their staff and this can go on for days and even weeks, they are advised also to contact them on Twitter which most do not use, when their circumstances become critical their families have to step in, this in itself causes further issues down to Data Protection, their are cases where the account holder as forgotten their password so they state to the family member they cannot help any further, then there are cases where a power of attorney has already been set up but they still refuse to deal with the named third party, this is also the case with regards to contacting their bereavement department.

I have had a recent case where a family members nan is housebound and is dependant on her call alarm to alert carers when she is in trouble, there was a fault and they left her without a working phone line for 5 days, her call alarm only works through a phone line, she explained this to them five times, they kept stating that they had no engineers to fix the problem any sooner and that her nan would have to wait. During these five days sadly her nan had a fall and was unable to call for help, she is now currently on day eight in hospital, no compassion has been shown by **[provider]** and they even refused to let her talk on behalf of her very sick nan, even thou she is named on her account, so she has had to communicate with them when she visits her in hospital so her nan can give permission for her to talk to them. Sadly there is an update to this story, the lady has not left hospital and is receiving end of life care.

I have a lot more stories to tell but this would be a very long read indeed.

[provider] should do an URGENT review into their systems and policies and identify fully all of their elderly and disabled customers, there foreign call centre operatives need retraining and in my opinion they should have a UK call centre set up with a trained welfare team. All vulnerable customers should be sent via post a questionnaire and also include a Power of Attorney form, it is of no use having this sent out when there is already a problem. All vulnerable customers should also have a PIN number which can be used by families/fiends/carers for times when the account holder is unable to remember their passwords or are too sick to speak for themselves.

Until a dedicated UK team is set up all their customers accounts should be flagged so they can be dealt with in a timely manner and issues resolved in the first instance so no delay to repairs occur or account queries.

Senior staff in a company should be held fully responsible for failings and fines should be imposed for consumer harm.

I have personally reached out to **[provider]** managers through our Facebook group regarding all of the above, even asking for them to set up a UK call centre for or anyone classed as vulnerable but unfortunately it has fallen on deaf ears even thou they have joined our complaints group and are FULLY aware of their customers problems even their CEO and Chairman get contacted regularly by frustrated customers, so they cannot state that they are unaware of what is going on in their own organisation.

THIS IS CONSUMER HARM AT ITS VERY WORST, I am absolutely appalled by the treatment that their customers are receiving on a daily basis, STOP PUTTING PROFITS BEFORE PEOPLE, get your act together!

I hope in me highlighting these issues this will help towards change, in this day and age this should not be happening and I am very saddened by some of our Facebook members experiences.

If you require any further help or information on this subject or any further consultations please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards.