



CAO Manual: Annex 2

Guidelines for Communications Providers submitting a complaint to the Commitments Assurance Office

1. INTRODUCTION

1. These guidelines explain how the Commitments Assurance Office (CAO) deals with complaints from Communications Providers (CPs) about BT's compliance with the Commitments or the Governance Protocol (hereafter the Commitments). These guidelines are intended to support efficient and effective resolution of complaints for both the CP raising the issue and for BT.
2. The CAO's guidelines apply only to BT's compliance with the Commitments, not to BT's wider compliance and regulatory framework. Service issues should be raised with the relevant downstream BT Customer Facing Unit (CFU): Consumer, Enterprise or Global.
3. Complaints about Openreach's compliance with the Commitments should be addressed in the first instance to Openreach's Commitments Monitoring Office (CMO) following the [CMO's guidelines](#).

2. SUBMISSION CRITERIA

4. The CAO will acknowledge a complaint within 2 working days of receipt.
5. Each complaint starts with an Enquiry Stage to check it meets the CAO's submission criteria (see Section 6). The CAO may seek further information from the party raising the issue to confirm the scope and nature of the allegations made.
6. The CAO will investigate a complaint where it meets the following criteria:
 - a. The complaint is about compliance with the Commitments (the CP should identify both the specific Commitment or Commitments concerned and the nature of the compliance issue raised); and
 - b. A senior officer of the CP has signed a statement supporting the complaint and confirming that the facts submitted are correct and complete to the best of their knowledge.

3. THE ENQUIRY STAGE

7. The Enquiry Stage enables the CAO to undertake preliminary steps to assess the complaint, after which the CAO will tell the CP whether it will open an investigation. The CAO aims to complete the Enquiry Stage within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint.
8. Where the CAO decides not to open an investigation, it will explain its reasons to the CP.
9. While there is no "right of appeal" if the CAO decides not to open an investigation, a CP can submit an amended complaint to include new relevant information not previously available to take account of the CAO's comments. In practice the CAO anticipates constructive engagement to avoid an iterative process.
10. If a CP is not satisfied with the CAO's complaints process, they of course retain their ability to raise their concerns to Ofcom.

4. THE INVESTIGATION STAGE

11. Where the CAO decides to open an investigation it will establish an indicative timetable, and update the CP of its plans (both at the outset and as the matter progresses).
12. The CAO will aim to complete all investigations within 2 months of opening them, but this may vary depending on complexity and scope. The CAO will tell the CP if it is clear at the outset, or it later becomes apparent, that the investigation will take longer than 2 months.
13. The CAO will keep the CP informed about the progress of the complaint on a regular basis.

5. THE OUTCOME OF AN INVESTIGATION

14. The CAO will report its conclusions at the end of an investigation to the BTCC. The CAO will keep the CP informed about the process (which could include, for example, the various enquiries that have been taken place in the course of the investigation), but it is important to understand that the decision on whether there has or has not been a breach of the Commitments sits with the BTCC. Therefore the CAO does not share its thinking about the substance of the complaint ahead of the BTCC's decision. Once the BTCC has decided the matter, the CAO will report back to the CP on the action, if any, taken by the BTCC as a result of the complaint.
15. There are a range of possible outcomes to complaints brought to the CAO, including:
 - a. The BTCC concludes there are no grounds for action arising from the complaint, since the Commitments are being delivered by BT as required;
 - b. The BTCC concludes that there are no grounds for action since BT has already taken remedial action in response to the CP's complaint;
 - c. The BTCC concludes that although BT is complying with the Commitments, it has recommended that BT provide clearer advice to BT people about a particular issue arising from the Commitments or if it has concerns about the culture and behaviors of BT people; and
 - d. The BTCC decides there has been a breach of the Commitments, and it recommends remedial action to BT to ensure compliance with the Commitments.
16. The BTCC (via the CAO) notifies Ofcom of the outcome of any investigations, even if remedial action has been successfully implemented by BT. The BTCC also notifies the Openreach Board, Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee if it determines that these matters relate to Openreach.

6. FORMAT FOR SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT TO THE CAO

17. Complaints should be submitted to the Director of the CAO via email to cao@bt.com.
18. The CAO will inform the relevant part(s) of BT of the complaint, and will share the complaint with appropriate senior managers to those areas. If the complaint contains confidential information, the CP should provide a separate non-confidential version of the complaint. The CAO does not conduct anonymous "below the line" investigations.
19. Unless the CP specifically requests otherwise, the CAO will inform BT of the business name of the CP. In some cases a CP may wish to remain anonymous (for example, where they feel disclosure might prejudice ongoing commercial relations). The CAO will respect this but CPs must recognise that maintaining anonymity might hinder the effectiveness of the investigation, or in some cases prevent it from taking place.

20. A submission must contain the following:
 - a. A summary of the complaint.
 - b. Details of which parts of BT Group are relevant to the complaint.
 - c. Details of the third party's relationship with BT Group.
 - d. A contact name of the manager within the CP with whom the CAO should liaise in respect of the complaint; and
 - e. A statement signed by a senior officer of the CP supporting the complaint and confirming that the facts submitted are correct and complete to the best of their knowledge.

21. The investigation of a complaint will be significantly assisted if the CP is able to provide additional information along the following lines:
 - a. Confirmation of the BT service, product or process concerned, with particular reference to the specific section(s) in the Commitments.
 - b. An explanation of the reasons for the complaint and any evidence in support.
 - c. Evidence of good faith in attempts to resolve the complaint with a relevant BT manager.
 - d. Whether and how the issue has affected their business.
 - e. Any solution which the CP wishes to propose for addressing the complaint.