

Human rights

BT Social and
Environmental report



THE QUEEN'S AWARDS
FOR ENTERPRISE:
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
2003

Human rights

We base all our relevant BT policies and procedures on the principles set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations”.

We are committed to protect and enhance the human dignity of every BT employee and everyone who has dealings with BT.

Here we describe our approach to the human rights issues, under these headings:

- Principles
- BT products and services
- Supply and use chains
- Privacy
- Freedom of expression.

Principles

We use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (www.unhcr.ch/udhr/index.htm) to ensure all our policies enhance human dignity. But new challenges and opportunities arise all the time, and we can't rely on policy alone to make sure we address human rights issues properly.

All our employees have access to the Universal Declaration on our intranet, and an outline of our approach is included in the guidance document accompanying our Statement of Business Practice.

We are in contact with many expert groups and information sources that can help us implement our commitment to human dignity and improve our procedures if necessary.

For example, we are a signatory to the UN's Global Compact, an initiative that strives to motivate business and industry around nine principles on environment, labour and human rights. BT participates in the Global Compact Learning Forum. We report on our progress and

performance against the Global Compact principles – see our online Global Compact report index.

BT products and services

The best way to implement our commitment to human dignity is to enhance the positive impact our products and services can have on human rights.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, and a critical means to promote human rights in general. Greater access to information and communications technology (ICT) can be a source of openness in otherwise closed societies. ICT provides an extremely fast, efficient and safe way to disseminate information and can be invaluable to organisations dedicated to promoting human rights.

However, we recognise that worldwide respect for human dignity is more than just a click away.

Like many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, new technological advances bring new challenges to, and interpretations of, free expression.

An example is the misuse of the internet by criminals. We address this major concern in two of our independently written 'Hot Topics':

- Written by Solitaire Townsend of independent consultancy Futerra, Abuse of the Internet considers issues around the extreme abuse of the internet. This is available as a download PDF from the Hot Topics section of our online report.
- Written by James Wilsdon and Paul Miller of UK think-tank Demos, Virtual Vice examines BT's approach to issues of concern such as hacking, copyright infringement and spam. This is available as a download PDF from the Hot Topics section of our online report.

We hope that the economic potential of e-commerce and the increased transparency brought about by new technologies will have an overall positive impact on human rights. Our 'Hot Topic' Modern Communications and Quality of Life explores this potential in more detail. A download PDF is available from the Hot Topics section of our online report.

Supply and use chains

Our impact on human rights has two aspects:

- The supply chain – the working conditions under which the products and services purchased by BT are produced
- The use chain – the effect of the use of our products and services (after they have been sold) on human rights.

Supply chain

It is our aspiration that the working conditions in our supply chain meet the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Labour Organisation Conventions. See more at Human rights in the supply chain in the Suppliers section of our online Social and Environmental report.

Use chain

The main concern here is the misuse of our products and services, for example using the internet for crime. Our 'Hot Topics' Abuse of the Internet and Virtual Vice cover these issues and are available as download PDFs from the Hot Topics section of our online report. We will continue to carefully monitor and address these concerns where possible.

Other use chain issues are privacy and freedom of expression, both of which are discussed later in this document.

The Modern Communications and Quality of Life 'Hot Topic' addresses the question of whether communications technology has made life better or worse. You can download a PDF version from the Hot Topics section of our online report.

On the positive side, communications technology offers new opportunities for education, learning and development – issues that are examined in more detail in the Digital inclusion section of our online report.

These are complex issues. With so many different national approaches to censorship and access to information, we have to balance our support for free expression with our commitment to abide by the law, wherever we operate.

But we believe that, ultimately, developments in ICT will have a beneficial impact on human rights. BT will continue to play a key part in the debate.

Privacy

Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

“No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor attacks upon his honour and reputation.”

While privacy is not a new challenge, developments in ICT have given rise to some new dilemmas.

Protecting online customers

We have to balance giving a tailored customer service with protecting customer privacy.

For example, if BT customers in the UK wish to use our website to manage their account, check their bill and buy various products or services, they have to register first – which involves the disclosure of certain personal information. We have a specific privacy policy covering this situation.

BT also has a detailed Acceptable Use Policy that shows how we protect the privacy of our online customers. This is balanced with our expectations of customers' behaviour towards each other when using our services.

Customers' preferences can be tracked online to offer personalised services and special offers. But customers may choose to opt out of this service.

Protecting all customers

We know that privacy is very important to all our customers, not just those online. BT complies with, and is registered under, the Data Protection Act in the UK, and we take all reasonable care to prevent any unauthorised access to personal data.

BT's Caller Display and Call Return services in the UK can make customer numbers available to the people they are calling. But dialling 141 before calling can prevent this and we also offer to withhold numbers permanently free of charge.



Information and data on this page has been verified by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd.



Information and data on this page has been verified by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd.

Human rights continued

Customers are also able to screen out most direct marketing calls by registering with the UK Telephone Preference Service (www.tpsonline.org.uk). British Telecommunications plc (BT) operates under a licence granted by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, under section 7 of the UK Telecommunications Act. This means we only use personal details for the reason that they were entrusted to us and don't pass them on to other parts of the business.

Sometimes personal details do have to be disclosed – for example, in the prevention or detection of a criminal offence.

BT employees

We have several policies and codes relating to the use of BT telephones, email and the internet by BT staff.

All staff have been made aware that email and internet access may be monitored and that certain types of message and use of the internet are considered inappropriate while at work and using our system. This is common business practice, and BT does allow reasonable use of personal email.

Freedom of expression

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm) states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a critical means of promoting human rights in general.

But technological advances bring new challenges to the right to freedom of expression and new interpretations of it.

Protecting children

A key challenge is to balance the right to freedom of expression with the need to protect children online.

BT is a board member of the Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA), (www.icra.org), an international organisation that aims to protect children from potentially harmful material and protect free speech on the internet.

The ICRA asks web authors to give details of what is and is not present on their site. From this, the organisation generates a content label (a short piece of computer code) which the author adds to the site. It enables users, especially parents of young children, to set their internet browser to accept or reject access to certain types of content. The key point for freedom of expression is that ICRA does not itself rate internet content – the content providers do so if they wish to participate.

Our own programme, BT Safe Surf, (www.btsafersurfing.com) gives detailed information for parents and provides user-friendly training for children.

Content provision

BT acts on complaints about content hosted on our servers. We sit on the funding council of the UK Internet Watch Foundation, (www.iwf.org.uk), which notifies us of illegal content stored on our servers and webspace.

We have contributed to the work of the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services (ICSTIS), (www.ictsis.org.uk). Part of ICSTIS' remit involves registering certain types of phone services in the UK, such as dating services, betting, fundraising and services of a sexual nature. This safeguards the right to freedom of expression while ensuring protection of users, legality and quality.

We have published two 'Hot Topics' that explore the problem of misuse of the internet:

- Written by Solitaire Townsend of independent consultancy Futerra, Abuse of the Internet considers issues around the extreme abuse of the internet. This is available as a download PDF from the Hot Topics section of our online Social and Environmental report.

- Written by James Wilsdon and Paul Miller of UK think-tank Demos, Virtual Vice examines BT's approach to issues of concern such as hacking, copyright infringement and spam. A download PDF is available from the Hot Topics section of our online report.

As the issues develop and technology advances we will update this part of our report with our most recent activities to combat misuse of the internet while protecting freedom of expression.



Information and data on this page has been verified by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd.



Information and data on this page has been verified by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd.



Offices worldwide

© British Telecommunications plc 2004
Registered office: 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ
Registered in England No. 1800000

Design by Red Letter Design