

Switching for Business (SfB) - Frequently Asked Questions

The industry Gaining Provider Led Business switching process solution

What's changing?

New Ofcom General Conditions require that residential and business customers can switch their voice (everything except mobile) and broadband services using a process led by the gaining provider, regardless of the network or technology their existing provider uses. The new rules will apply to Internet Access Services (IAS), and Number Based Interpersonal Communications Services (NBICS).

An Ofcom statement was issued on 3rd February 2022, you can read more details here.

[Statement: Quick, easy and reliable switching - Ofcom](#)

What are the key regulation changes?

- The Gaining Provider must lead the switch at the request of the customer (irrespective of business size). The interaction is then between the gaining retail CP and the losing retail CP, or their appointed representative (e.g. wholesaler or Managed Access Provider (MAP)).
- New switching rules apply both within and between Infrastructure or Voice Network providers.
- Ofcom instructed industry to remove some of the previous rules relating to 'Notification of Transfer', including 'Cancel Other' functionality.
- Ofcom have not definitively mandated a switching process for business customers, but CPs and industry bodies are expected to work together to develop a simple and efficient Gaining Provider Led (GPL) Business switching process.
- The Switching for Business (SfB) process will work alongside the existing Number Porting process.
- The new Switching Regulatory obligation falls upon the Retailer, i.e., the company that contracts with the End Customer (their company name is on the customer's bill). Wholesalers will not be responsible for switching; however, retailers will work closely with their wholesaler and Managed Access Provider (MAP).
- Ofcom regulation (as at Sep25) states that CPs must ensure continuity of service, unless it's not technically feasible, and any loss of service during the CP Migration must not exceed one working day.
- The fine for not fulfilling the new switching regulatory requirement is potentially up to 10% of a Retailer provider's annual turnover.

Where can I find out more?

Find out more on our **Switching for Business webpage** - which contains the very latest Gaining Provider Led business switching information and documentation, and on the TOTSCo and OTA2 websites on the following links. <https://www.fcs.org.uk/gaining-provider-led-business-switching/>

<https://totsco.org.uk/> <https://www.offta.org.uk/best-practice-guide> (under consumer switching).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is a switch? - *a switch is where a customer is changing their retail provider broadband and / or voice services at the same location (excludes mobile voice services and business customers moving premises).*

Q2. What's in scope of a business switch? - *Ofcom have defined that in scope are those suppliers of NBICS (Number Based Interpersonal Communications Service - generally, any voice service that uses a geographic or non-geographic number which is not a mobile service), or IAS (Internet Access Services (broadband)), provided at a fixed location, where that switch does not involve a change in location, (therefore a business move is out of scope).*

Q3. Who's in scope of the Business switching regulation? *If you are a Business retail CP and your brand is on the customers telecom bill, it is your responsibility as you are in scope and you should comply with mandatory Ofcom switching regulation.*

Q4. When are the changes happening? *Gaining Provider Led Switching for Business (SfB) updates will be posted via: [Gaining Provider Led Business Switching public - FCS](#), OTA2 and the TOTSCo website.*

Q5. GPLB-Steering Group membership and voting - *Who is represented at the Gaining Provider Led Business Steering Group. How do I gain membership and how does voting work? We have different parts of our company, how do we make sure we're properly represented? *The aim when setting up the GPLB-SG has been to ensure representation and consensus from the whole of the business industry sector, including Retail CPs, Wholesalers who are supporting retailers and Trade Association representing retail CPs.**

Q6. Why should I use the new Gaining Provider Led Business switching process, what's in it for me? *The new Switching for Business (SfB) process has been developed by a representative industry steering group, to enable effective business switching for business customers of all sizes. The new process will act as an enabler to your business switches completing effectively, while at the same time helping you to meet Ofcom's regulatory requirements. There are beneficial features of the SfB process, including the ability to request asset lists to avoid erroneous transfers, as well as early visibility for Losing Retail CPs (LRCPs) about potential switches, to help keep their customers informed about the impacts of switching.*

Q7. Will the full functionality of the Switching for Business process be available on day one? *Yes, the process will be fully functional from day one for any CP that has been commercially and technically onboarded (gone through registration, onboarding and testing with their MAP).*

Q8. What is a MAP? - *A Managed Access Provider (MAP) will help you connect to other Retail CPs and manage your message exchanges. There are different types of MAP, all of which are listed on the GPLB and TOTSCo webpages. Please see more detail about MAPs on the following link, so that you can choose the right MAP for your business. <https://totsco.org.uk/managed-access/> All MAPs will provide either APIs, portals or switching integration functionality.*

Q9. What are the Costs for Switching for Business? *There will be costs associated with implementing and consuming the new Switching for Business (SfB) process. These costs will depend on a number of factors, including how you choose to consume SfB (either directly with TOTSCo or via a MAP). We*

suggest you liaise with either TOTSCo or your chosen MAP. A list of MAPs can be found here <https://totsco.org.uk/managed-access>

Q10. Does the Switching for Business (SfB) process work for smaller communication providers? *The GPLB-Steering Group has worked collaboratively, representing all sectors and sizes of the business market and have designed the process to work for all CPs.*

Q11. Will there be any changes to the Number Porting process? We understand the importance of porting numbers and the existing NP process will not change. Number Porting continues to operate independently of the Switching for Business process.

Q12. Business switching lead times - I've read in the press about 'same day switching' and 'switching in 60 seconds', does this apply to business switches? - Lead times will be determined and agreed by the gaining provider and the customer. Though it may be possible to switch on the same day (there is no constraint in the process to prevent this), there are a number of factors that should be taken into consideration (number portability, supply chain lead times etc). Please refer to the Switching for Business process SLAs (which are an appendix in the main process) on the Switching for Business webpage <https://www.fcs.org.uk/gaining-provider-led-business-switching/>

Switching should not be deliberately frustrated or delayed, and these SLAs should be considered as the latest date. For a better customer experience and as best practice, CPs should respond as soon as practicable to do so.

Q13. Initiating a switch - How would a CP initiate a switch using the Switching for Business (SfB) process? The process to initiate a switch is described in the Business Switching Process Design, but in summary, it will require the Gaining Retail CP (GRCP) to provide sufficient information to identify the customer, the location of their current services and other information that will allow a Losing CP to confirm they have the correctly identified services to be switched.

See the process documentation on our webpage for more detail <https://www.fcs.org.uk/gaining-provider-led-business-switching/>.

Q14. Does the new Switching for Business process require that we must switch business services all at once or can we for example project manage them, bearing in mind that sometimes multiple services will need to be switched? The new SfB process enables you to project manage multiple business services switches to meet your customers required timescales. You do not have to switch services all at once. For further information, full detail of the process can be found [here](#)

Q15. What is in scope of the SfB process? For full details regarding scope of SfB, please refer to Switching Principles documentation which can be found here <https://www.fcs.org.uk/gaining-provider-led-business-switching/>

Q16. Losing Retail CP (LRCP) does not support business switching. This is an 'exceptions case' and the Switching for Business process cannot be used in these circumstances. CPs should seek their own Legal and Regulatory advice in this scenario.

Q17. Losing CP issues. As a Losing CP how do we resolve issues arising or associated with the switching journey? - Work is underway to create a CP-to-CP exceptions process. This will facilitate communication between losing and gaining retail CPs to allow them to work together to resolve these types of issues and it is planned that Guidance will follow.

Q18. If as a CP we receive a request for a cease, and we're unable to action this immediately, what should our response be to the Gaining CP? You should not delay or misuse the process and you must take action to fulfil the request as soon as possible. You should not reject the request from the Gaining CP but should acknowledge it has been received and then fulfil the order as soon as practically possible.

Q19. Do new customers have to use the Switching for Business industry process? All Regulated Providers must ensure that they maintain simple and efficient processes to support business switching. Business customers may choose not to switch their services and instead elect to manage the acquisition and cease of services as required.

Q20. Will the Losing CP have visibility of the gaining CP. Yes, as part of the new Switching for Business process, the losing retail CP will have visibility of the gaining retail CP identity.

Q21. What is the wholesaler/reseller Business Switching responsibilities? The switching responsibilities lie with the retailer. If you don't hold the asset information that you think you'll need to follow the process, then speak to your wholesale provider.

Q22. What would be the obligation on the Losing Retail CP (LRCP), where they might have to provide the underlying circuit reference? Where an access network provider or wholesaler offers 'intra network switching' they should have the capability to provide their CP customers with accurate service/circuit identifiers to enable accurate intra network switching. Intra switching is where both the gaining and losing CP are using the same wholesale or network provider and the switch being requested reuses these assets.

Q23. Matching - What happens if a Gaining Retail CP (GRCP) cannot get a match? CPs will get a response code where a match request was not successful. This will enable the GRCP to talk with their customer about their existing bill to establish what information is required to enable a successful match. There are various pieces of information that can be used to get a match. For further details, refer to Sfb Customer Matching Guidance which can be found here: [Gaining Provider Led Business Switching public - FCS](#).

Q24. Can the GRCP choose not to switch for IAS and to only provide a new service, but still switch for voice using porting? No, the GPLB-SG believes this is not possible. The gaining provider must be able to offer a fully Gaining Provider Led solution for the customer to meet Ofcom regulation, which for example includes keeping the customer informed during the switching process.

Q25. Reseller responsibilities · What happens in the scenario of a reseller to reseller switching scenario? The end customer is still changing their retail CP, therefore the gaining and losing resellers must still consider the Ofcom switching regulation. The retailer is responsible for complying with Ofcom regulation. Where a customer does not initiate the change of CP, for example because of a base sale of, or acquisition of a base, GPLB SG believes that these are out of scope of the industry switching process.

Q26. Impacts of switching - As a Losing CP, if we have already sent the impacts of switching information, must we resend it if we receive a successful matching request from another CP? **No, as long as the matching request is within short timescales and there is no impact on the switch, then you can return response code 1199 plus confirmation of the date it was originally sent.**

Q27. What is the business SLA for providing impacts of Switching Information and does the Losing Retail CP have to make these available to the customer? Ofcom stipulates that Business retailers must keep customers informed throughout the switching process and the SfB process supports this and as best practice recommends that CPs provide impacts of switching information to the customer. If retailers choose to provide impacts of switching information, the recommendation is that these are provided as soon as practically possible.

Q28. Is there a specific field where we can enter a master billing reference in the message specification? There is not a dedicated separate field for this, but the master billing reference can be added into the generic account field and the Losing CP should enable these entries to be accepted.

Q29. Why has the amount of Customer identifier information been extended from OTS? The information required at the matching stage should not delay the matching, and therefore the overall switching process, for customers. Widening the information to include a 'service identifier', along with the business name and business address, would still ensure that a match request can be completed with information that is more readily available to the customer. In designing the process we've considered the balance of protecting the end user within the switching journey. There are a number of different matching scenarios. Please refer to the process and matching documentation at: [Gaining Provider Led Business Switching public - FCS](#).

Q30. RCPID - will the RCPID be different for Business and Residential. The option to use RCPID is subject to discussion between a CP and their Managed Access Provider. It's important that the RCPID used reflects the CP name on the customer's bill.

Q31. How do I handle Erroneous Transfers when they occur - Where an end user (your customer) says they don't know about a request to switch, this can be for many reasons, such as a tenant instigating a switch when the landlord who pays the bill, or where an incorrect address has been used. In this situation a new tactical process, facilitated by OTA2, is now in place. A suite of supporting documents recovery guidance, including how to access the erroneous transfer directory and an application template, are available on the OTA website.

Q32. Do we always have to supply an asset list as a Losing Retail CP? The process requires that you send an asset list, if requested. However if you have previously sent an asset list and there has been no change, you do not have to resend the asset list. Please see response code 1197 to ensure the correct response is returned to the Gaining CP. Asset lists should only be requested where there is a genuine need for the data in order to correctly match services.

Q33. How do I handle any conflict with an open order? The OTS-IPG (Industry Process Group) have produced a best practice guide for residential switching that assists with open order situations. The GPLB-SG plan to build on this best practice, factoring in the more complex nature of business services, to produce a companion best practice guide. (currently awaiting approval)

Q34. Will the new Switching for Business process handle business switches that are already in progress? - No, the Sfb process is for new orders only. Orders that have been previously raised and are in progress, can continue through the process they are currently using to completion.

Q35. Business to Residential switching - What happens if I have a business customer who wishes to switch their Voice and Broadband services but also change their service contract, to be classified as residential (or vice versa)? How will this work from an end user and a CP perspective?

The Gaining Provider Led Business Steering Group (GPLB-SG) recognises this and there is a requirement, which is under consultation currently, to work through the process and technical details. A technical proposal has been tabled by GPLB-SG. (no requirement yet submitted) No agreed proposal to share as yet.

Q36. Emergency restoration - how will this happen? This is an 'exceptions case' that is relevant for both business and residential CPs, and as such a common approach would be beneficial and will be captured in our best practice documentation. The Number Porting process already has a documented process for emergency restoration. Please refer to the exception guide <https://www.fcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/A-Best-Practice-Guide-to-Avoidance-of-Erroneous-Transfers-and-recovery-options-on-the-Openreach-Network-V-0.5.pptx> . If you are not an Openreach customer please seek guidance from your network provider for the emergency restoration options they have available.

Q37. Losing Retail or Gaining CP ceases trading · What would happen if the LRCP/GRCP provider ceases trading and there is no response to the GRCP switching messages? This is an 'exceptions' case that the GPLB-SG recognises. This is relevant for both business and residential CPs, and as such a common approach would be beneficial. We propose to capture this in best practice documentation but it is not currently in place.