

Small / Trivial Bills – Standing Guidance

This document aims, in the interests of the level playing field, to provide standing guidance on the treatment of small and trivial bills under the Metering & Billing Systems Approval Scheme.

If an End-user has a very small Bill in an individual month / quarter, it may not be cost-effective for a Communications Provider to go through the billing process to collect, say, 5p. In general Communications Providers spend about £2.00 sending out each Bill.

Normally, such an outstanding amount would be carried forward to the next Bill, and the Metering & Billing Approval Bodies' Forum considered that this is sensible.

One kind of situation where this arises is an indirect access account, where there are no rental or standing charges, and in a given period very little usage takes place. There are other examples, which can be agreed between the Communications Provider and their chosen Approval Body.

Communications Providers may take the view that Bills of up to a few pounds may not be economical to collect and should be carried forward.

Strictly, to meet the requirements of **Clause 5** of the Metering and Billing Direction (the Direction), the Communications Providers would need to flag such a carried forward sum in order that it can be prevented from being carried forward a second time. Alternatively the Communications Provider would need to apply to Ofcom for dispensation, see **Clause 5.3** of the Direction.

It was never the Regulator's intention to force such complexity on Communications Providers. Therefore it is necessary for Approval Bodies to apply some interpretation to the requirements in respect of the carrying forward of small sums.

The Approval Bodies should take into account the Communications Providers' billing system capabilities and the End-user profiles in deciding what should be the upper limit on carried forward sums. Rather than applying to Ofcom per occasion, it is sufficient for Communications Providers to record the details in the SUS.

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