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Helen Grant
House of Commons
London
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RECEIVED

30 AUG 2019

21 August 2019

Dear Ms Grant,

Thank you for your email of 26 July 2019, regarding lack of coverage and questions raised about Ofcom coverage maps. Sharon White has asked me to respond whilst she is away from the office.

Ofcom's coverage checker does suggest that indoor coverage in that area is indeed poor, which aligns with the experience reported by your constituent. The coverage checker suggests that outdoor coverage is better, which may differ from the actual experience in that area. Differences between the predicted coverage and actual coverage can and do arise due to a variety of reasons. We receive refreshed coverage data from mobile operators on a frequent basis and strive to ensure they have a robust modelling approach for predicting mobile signals. We take the validity of our coverage data incredibly seriously, conducting our own drive testing to assess the accuracy of operator coverage models; and have fined operators when they have not provided us accurate data.

However, the probability of successfully sending/receiving calls, texts and data can further be compounded by external factors such as: number of people using a mast; position of and model of handset used; as well as the nature of the buildings that users may be around or inside, resulting in greater signal loss than expected.

Making communications work for everyone is Ofcom's objective. Mobile coverage is a key enabler for this and as such improving coverage is a key priority for Ofcom.

One way in which we are encouraging better coverage is when we auction "spectrum", the valuable airwaves that carry mobile signals. When mobile operators buy access to these airwaves, we can apply conditions to improve coverage in under-served areas.

In our next auction in 2020 – we have proposed that up to two operators commit to delivering good quality 4G coverage to 90% of the UK landmass, whilst improving coverage for 140,000 premises and building 500 new sites in rural areas. We have proposed giving operators four years to deliver this additional coverage and we expect much of the improvement will happen in the early years.

You may also be aware that the industry is developing alternative proposals to our obligations, and Ofcom is providing technical advice to Government to support these discussions. Ofcom will continue

working closely with the UK Government and industry to find further solutions, and we are committed to ensuring people get the mobile coverage they need wherever they go.

Yours sincerely



Alison Crosland

Group Director, Corporate Services Group