



## **Disconnection Policy for Business Customers**

If you cannot pay your bill, please contact our Business Collections Team using the telephone number shown on your bill. Most of our customers pay on time. It is only fair to them to keep our costs down by insisting that bills are paid promptly. Nevertheless, in cases of genuine financial difficulty, we may be able to help perhaps by extending the time for payment or agreeing payment by instalments.

We will only disconnect you as a last resort but if we have to cut you off then you will have to pay a reconnection fee.

We will not cut you off for non-payment while there is a genuine dispute about an unpaid bill for rental or call charges, but only so long as you have paid up for all charges that are not disputed. However, we may still bar all outgoing calls from your line until the dispute has been dealt with. Further details on disputes can be found in our Conditions of Service for Business Customers.

### **What our policy is about**

This policy statement is made by KCOM Group PLC. Our policy has been agreed by the industry regulator, OFCOM.

This policy may change from time to time in the light of experience.

It is intended to help our business customers who may have difficulty paying the bills issued by Kingston Communications. It does not relate to bills from any other telecommunications operator or service provider.

### **Our responsibilities to customers**

We will:

- Send a bill when it is due
- Send a reminder if payment is more than 14 days late
- Try to contact our customers who don't pay prior to disconnection

If contact has been made with our customers:

- We will look carefully at the reason for non-payment and try to agree a Payment Plan where it's sensible
- Payment Plans may be tougher if there have been payment problems in the past but they will also be realistic based on what our customers can afford to pay
- We will try to continue supply of basic telephone services while our customers pay off debts. We will expect our customers to pay off the total debt within a reasonable time, taking into account their income and other financial circumstances
- We may limit the type of telephone services available to our customers while they are paying off their debt. If we are going to limit service in any way, we will tell our customers why we are doing so and we will explain to them what types of call they can still make. There are various ways in which we can limit the service we provide such as stopping outgoing calls to premium rate numbers, international numbers, national numbers and even Kingston local calls. The most restricted service is one that only allows our customers to receive calls
- We will tell our customers that full service (or a limited service if they prefer it) will be restored once they have paid their bills in full. We will let our customers know that their usual charges for rent of the telephone line will continue while their service is limited. It will be explained clearly that if they do not meet agreed payment plans we may disconnect all telephone service. If that happens they will only be reconnected once they have paid their bill in full plus a reconnection charge
- We will tell our customers about ways in which they can manage their future bills better. We will explain services and charges such as stopping access to expensive services like premium rate or international calls and where relevant we will tell them about schemes which exist to help customers with claims about unauthorised telephone use in relation to premium rate services
- Where it would help we will also tell them about the option of paying bills every month.

If we cannot contact a customer:

- We will look at our customer's payment history and decide fairly whether we will limit our customer to receiving calls only or whether we will completely disconnect. If there have not been previous payment problems, and it does not look as if fraud is taking place, then we will initially limit the customer's service to incoming calls only

## **Our customers' responsibilities**

We expect our customers:

- To pay their bills as soon as they receive them
- To pay the remainder of their bill while any disputed charge is being investigated
- To tell our Business Collections Team as soon as possible if they cannot pay, or need a little extra time
- To agree to a Payment Plan if they cannot pay on time and to accept the limits on their service that we will explain to them
- Pay the charges associated with the late payments as detailed in the price manual

## **Our approach to disconnection**

We will always try to avoid disconnecting customers but may have to do so if:

- A customer fails to pay an instalment under an agreed Payment Plan
- A customer's bill (including any late payment charges) is still not paid 7 days after the final date shown on the red bill and:
  - There is a history of failure to pay on time and we cannot get in touch with the customer; or
  - The customer refuses to agree to a Payment Plan
- It looks like there has been fraud (Fraud means that someone has deliberately tried to get telephone services without any intent of payment for them)

- We discover that calls are being made from a customer's phone that the customer doesn't know about or hasn't agreed to
- Our customer breaks the Conditions of Service
- A customer's bill is getting so high we become worried that they may not be aware of the charges that they are incurring and may not be able to afford to pay them
- A bankruptcy petition is issued against one of our customers or if a customer goes into liquidation, administration or receivership
- A customer pays their bills by direct debit and their bank refuses to make the payment

## **Help and advice**

Help in understanding our policy and advice about payment problems is available from our Business Collections Team on **(01482) 602821**

If you would like to find out about your phone bill, Customer Care will be pleased to talk with you on **(01482) 602900**