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# My Demands of Vodafone

25th July 2022

The steps the company should take to change the way it closes accounts.

By George Monbiot, published on [monbiot.com](https://www.monbiot.com) 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Following my family's [shocking experience](#) in trying to cancel my deceased mother's Vodafone account, and the discovery that many other people have suffered the same treatment, or worse, I've made a list of changes I want the company to make. I have a meeting booked with the chief executive of Vodafone UK, and will keep pressing, in public and in private, until these demands have been met.

If you believe there is anything important missing from this list or that any of these demands could be improved, please let me know [by email](#). Thank you.

1. All staff answering the phone should be trained to handle cases involving the death of an account holder, and given clear guidance in speaking appropriately to bereaved relatives, friends or representatives.
2. A frontpage link on Vodafone's website that provides a step-by-step account of the processes and documents required to cancel a deceased person's contract. This page must include the number, email address and postal address of the appropriate team. There must be a variety of quick and simple means of closing an account: by email, post and online, as well as by telephone.
3. A maximum waiting time in which all calls to Vodafone's operatives – for this

- or other purposes – must either be answered by a human being or, if this time is exceeded, transferred to a guaranteed callback, with a maximum response time.
4. A commitment to close the contracts of deceased customers immediately on request, upon receipt of the minimum necessary proof, within the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018. A clear and simple procedure for submitting this proof, including, if legally valid, the option of a scan, photo or posted copy of the death certificate.
  5. Participation in [Settld](#), [Life Ledger](#), the [Death Notification Service](#), or a similar one-stop shop which enables families to cancel a deceased person's accounts with multiple companies.
  6. A maximum timeframe for the cancellation of the contracts of living customers, following the request of the account holder or their representative. Publication of the cancellation procedure Vodafone will now adopt.
  7. A general customer support email address on Vodafone's website, that can be used to send messages regarding queries of any nature. These queries to be answered promptly and appropriately.
  8. If the bots in Vodafone's webchat options cannot quickly and satisfactorily resolve an issue, it must be immediately escalated to a human being.
  9. A clear process for submitting evidence of Power of Attorney. A commitment to recognise and accept powers of attorney, and not to insist on speaking to people protected by those powers.
  10. Never to insist on speaking to the deceased account holder before cancelling a contract, which, believe it or not, appears to be common practice.
  11. Never to ask unnecessary or intrusive questions in the course of this action, as specified in the Data Protection Act.
  12. A commitment to make no further charges to a deceased person's account, or

the account of the living person who set up the contract on the deceased person's behalf, once notified of the death of the contract holder, and to cancel all charges accrued by that account from the date of death. There must be no cancellation or exit fees.

13. A commitment to check with account holders or, in the event of death or diminished capacity, their relatives or representatives, whether money is fairly and rightly owed to the company before demanding the recovery of that money.

14. The use of debt collection agencies only as a last resort, in pursuit of money genuinely owing to the company, and after other options have been explained to the customer and reasonably exhausted. Currently the use of debt collectors appears to be the default option for the recovery of any money the company deems owed to it. This policy must cease.

15. A code of practice, beyond the legal minimum, to which any debt collectors contracted by Vodafone must abide while pursuing money genuinely owed to the company.

16. A quick and clear process for reversing any damage to a customer's credit rating inflicted as a result of Vodafone's unfair pursuit of money not rightly owed to the company.

17. A fast and effective complaints procedure, explained on Vodafone's website, with a range of communication options (email, online, post and phone), including a clickable link enabling messages to be sent. Complaints to be handled promptly and fairly.

18. The publication by the chief executive of a sincere apology, not just to my family, but to all those who have been subject to Vodafone's predatory practices, whether bereaved families or other people legitimately seeking to end their contracts.

19. This apology to include an open and honest account of how and why these

practices developed. Were call waiting times deliberately lengthened to deter people seeking to end contracts? Were the operatives trained to be hostile and aggressive? Were they instructed to impede the swift closure of contracts and accounts? Were they instructed to pursue customers for money the customers do not owe? Who set up this abusive and coercive policy? Who is responsible for closing it down? Attempts by Vodafone to dismiss this repeated pattern of behaviour as an error or an accident will not be accepted.

20. The announcement of a compensation fund for people adversely affected by these predatory practices. Compensation to be paid to customers, former customers and others who

- a. remain out of pocket as a result of illegitimate charges made by the company
- b. have been pursued by debt collectors appointed by the company to recover money they do not legitimately owe to the company
- c. have had their credit score unfairly downgraded as a result of the company's actions.

Levels and thresholds for compensation to be proposed and agreed by an independent charity or service representing the customer interest, and paid by Vodafone directly and promptly to the aggrieved customers, former customers or others adversely affected.

21. A public commitment to place an institutional lock on these reforms, so that they cannot be quickly or easily reversed.

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