

News story: Pagers merger may face in-depth investigation

Capita and Vodafone face an in-depth merger investigation, unless the companies offer acceptable ways of addressing competition concerns.

Capita and Vodafone both supply wide-area paging services to customers, including emergency services and hospitals. Customers rely on pagers because issues such as coverage, reliability and battery life mean that alternative technologies, like mobile phones, are not suitable.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) initial investigation into the merger has found that it could lead to a substantial lessening of competition as the 2 companies are the only suppliers of wide-area paging services in the UK.

It found that, after the merger, customers could face price rises and reduced quality of coverage.

Capita has until 17 May 2017 to offer proposals to resolve the competition concerns. If it does not offer undertakings, or if the CMA is unable to accept undertakings offered, the merger will be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation.

News story: Just Eat/Hungryhouse merger faces in-depth investigation

Both companies provide online takeaway ordering services. These give restaurants the opportunity to reach a wide pool of consumers and offer them the convenience of choosing from a large range of takeaway providers in one place.

Following its initial investigation into the merger, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that the companies are close competitors because of the similarity of their service and their broad geographical coverage.

The CMA also believes that more recent entrants to this market offering delivery services – such as Deliveroo, UberEATS and Amazon Restaurants – represent less direct competition to the companies as these tend to target different types of restaurant (primarily dine-in restaurants without their own delivery services). These recent entrants also offer less extensive

geographic coverage than Just Eat and Hungryhouse.

The CMA is therefore concerned that the loss of competition resulting from the Just Eat/Hungryhouse merger may result in worse terms for restaurants using either of the 2 companies.

The merger will now be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation by an independent group of CMA panel members – unless Just Eat is able to offer undertakings which sufficiently address the CMA's competition concerns.

Just Eat has until 17 May 2017 to offer proposals to resolve the competition concerns. If it does not offer undertakings, or if the CMA is unable to accept undertakings offered, the merger will be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation.

Looked after children must have same educational opportunities as their peers – Kirsty Williams

The Cabinet Secretary has reported on progress to better support the education of children who are looked after and outlined her plans for action to continue to raise their educational attainment and make sure they have the same opportunities as their peers.

An annual report on the three year plan for looked after children highlights the progress being made, including an improvement in GSCE results. In 2016 23 per cent of children who are looked after achieved the equivalent of five GCSEs at grade A*–C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics, a 6 percentage points increase on 2015.

The Welsh Government has also worked with Cardiff University – CASCADE to create a new online hub to share information and resources focusing on children in care to help improve their educational outcomes.

The Education Secretary has committed to:

- Looking at the training available to schools and further education colleges with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Getting local authorities to review the roles of key workers with a responsibility for children who are looked after.
- Working with the third sector to consider better ways of supporting children who are often difficult to engage in education.
- Making better use of the data available to help looked after children.

The Education Secretary recently announced that the Pupil Development Grant

will be extended to provide support to three year old looked after children during their early years in schools. This is part of more than £90m this year to help disadvantaged pupils.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Central to our national mission of education reform is for all children to do well and reach their potential, whatever their background. Looked after children must have the same opportunities as their peers. We have seen an excellent improvement in the GCSE results of those in care and we have committed more funding to build on this, but I want to go further.

“Children often enter care come from a background of family crisis or breakdown. While we can not change their personal experiences, we will continue to support them through their education and prepare them for adulthood.

“Research shows that all too often that simply by being ‘in care’ the expectations placed on these young people reduce. We are taking action to face this issue head on and will continue to do so.”

Contact centre Carpeo Estate Planning to create 300 jobs in Newport over the next five years with Welsh Government support

The new business will be based at a new contact centre in Newport where it plans to create 300 jobs with Welsh Government support.

The FCA-regulated organisation, currently employs 250 people in Swindon, and is opening the new branch at Cleppa Park, Duffryn. A location in Teeside was under consideration for this project but funding support from the Welsh Government secured the investment for Wales.

The centre opens in June and the business is actively recruiting 24 employees at all levels for its launch date, rising to 60 by end of the year and 300 by 2022.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This is Carpeo’s first investment in Wales and I am delighted the

company is joining a growing and vibrant sector that employs more than 30,000 people in over 200 centres in Wales.

“Carpeo has ambitious growth plans with the potential for further future investment in Wales and I welcome their plan to open this new business in Newport that will create a range of jobs and training opportunities for local people.”

Carpeo Estate Planning’s Chief Executive Officer Mike Minahan said:

“Having sat on the board of the Welsh Contact Centre Forum for the past 15 years, I know that Wales has a range of competitive advantages to offer contact centre businesses. The quality of people available and their experience of working in a regulated services market is a huge pull. On the softer side, the Welsh accent is sympathetic and consoling, particularly important in our market.

“We’re hugely proud to be bringing these well-paid roles and good employment opportunities to Newport.”

For a small monthly fee, members of the new subscription-based Carpeo Estate Planning service have access to affordable wills and funeral planning products. Members can also access a discount portal enabling them to save thousands a year on key household purchases, including at supermarkets Tesco, Sainsbury’s, Morrisons and Asda.

Innovative software that has been tried and tested will be utilised to identify those people whom these products and services are particularly relevant and who would have had recent experience of the difficulties of executing an intestate estate. A potential market of 3 million people has been identified.

Sandra Busby, Managing Director, Welsh Contact Centre Forum, said:

“This announcement is further evidence of the attraction of Wales as a home for some of the most Innovative contact centre businesses around. Over the past two decades our role has been to build up

Wales as the destination of choice for organisations that want to run a successful contact centre.”

Carpeo’s turnover grew to £9.4M this financial year with plans to rapidly increase to £20M over the next four years, by expanding into Wales and potentially other areas of the UK.

Carpeo Estate Planning has partnered with Hugh James, the UK’s largest provider of will writing Services; Golden Leaves, the market leader in the

provision of funeral plans, and professional advisory firm Broomfield & Alexander.

Labour will transform education for the many not the few

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, will today outline Labour's transformational plan to invest in a National Education Service to ensure no one is held back and create a more skilled workforce and productive economy.

Labour's plan to increase schools funding and introduce free, lifelong education in colleges is at the heart of its commitment to create a society run for the many not the few.

Jeremy will be joined by Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary, and Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Secretary, at a college in Leeds on Wednesday to announce the details of the plan.

Labour's key pledges are:

- Stop the cuts to school budgets with a real terms increase in funding
- Reduce class sizes to under 30 for all five, six and seven year olds
- Free school meals for all primary school children
- Restore education maintenance allowance for college students
- Restore student grants for university students
- Scrap fees on courses for adult learners looking to re-train or upskill

The plans will be funded from the £19.4 billion that will be raised by reversing the Conservative Party's cuts to corporation tax. Labour has previously announced extending free school meals to all primary age children will be funded by levying VAT on private school fees.

Jeremy Corbyn said:

"People of all ages are being held back by a lack of funding for education, and this in turn is holding back the economy by depriving industry of the untapped talent of thousands of people.

"The Conservatives have spent seven years starving schools of funding, meaning headteachers are having to send begging letters to parents

to
ask for money. They have also cut support for students and forced colleges to
increase fees. It's created a downward spiral that is bad for the people
being
held back and bad for the economy.

"Labour will do things differently. Our new National Education
Service will transform our schools and education system to ensure a future
for
the many not the few. We will reverse the Conservatives' tax giveaways to big
business and put money back where it belongs, in our schools, our colleges
and
our communities."

Angela Rayner said:

"Our plans for a new National Education Service show there is a
clear choice at this election. Between the Tories who have broken their
promises to parents and children, or a Labour party with a real plan for
education for the many not the few.

"We will invest in schools and in our young people, ensuring no
primary pupils go hungry during the day, reducing class sizes so children can
learn and teachers can teach, and restoring the maintenance allowance and
grants for students in both further and higher education."

Ends

Notes to editors:

- Stop the cuts to school budgets with a real terms increase in funding
- Labour will ensure all schools have the funding they need, including
£4.8 billion per year for English schools by 2021-22, as part of £5.66
billion additional annual funding across the UK by the end of the
parliament.
- We estimate that preventing any losses under the proposed national
funding formula in every year after the first will cost around £335
million.
- Reduce class sizes to under 30 for all five, six and seven year olds
- £8.4 billion capital investment to ensure schools have the number of
places they need and £13.8 billion to ensure that school buildings are
up to standard.
- Free school meals for all primary school children
- House of Commons Library research says extending free school meals for
all primary children would cost £700-£900 million, paid for by VAT on
private schools.
- Restore education maintenance allowance for college students
- Assuming the same proportion of 16-18 year olds qualify for EMA as

previously the cost would be £582 million a year.

- Restore student grants for university students
- Total spend on maintenance grants in 2015/16 was £1.57 billion. If this is uprated in line with CPI inflation then the cost next year is £1.63 billion, rising to £1.73 billion by the end of the parliament.
- Scrap fees on courses for adult learners looking to re-train or upskill
- Increase the adult skills budget by £1.5 billion by the end of the parliament in order to abolish upfront fees and increase course funding by an average of 10 per cent year on year.

Corporation tax

- From next tax year, the headline rate of corporation tax will rise from its current 19 per cent to 21 per cent in 2018-19, 24 per cent in 2019-20 and 26 per cent in 2020-21. This will still leave it at the lowest rate in the G7. The small profits rate, payable by firms with profits below £300,000, will rise less sharply to 20 per cent in 2018-19 and 21 per cent in 2020-21
- According to Treasury and Office for Budget Responsibility figures, the Tories' tax giveaways are costing the exchequer £65.2 billion over the four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22, including £19.4 billion in the last year of the parliament. This contrasts with £46.8 billion based on the forecasts when the cuts were introduced.