



Price Transparency Guidance 2026

What the Changes Mean for Marketers

Contents

Purpose of This Document	1
Summary of Key Regulatory Changes	2
The ‘Three-in-One’ Rule: How to Present Prices	2
Mid-Contract Price Changes (Telco & Services)	3
Savings & Reference Prices	3
Additional Fees & Delivery Charges	4
Subscription & Free-Trial Offers	4
Further Reading	5

Purpose of This Document

From February 2026, the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has introduced strengthened price transparency requirements. These rules apply across all consumer facing sectors, covering how prices, fees and promotions must be displayed in any marketing communication.

This document provides an accessible, marketer-friendly summary of the key requirements and what they mean for campaign creative, landing pages and partner activity.

(Note: This document should not be taken as legal advice. Brands should consult internal legal teams where needed.)

Summary of Key Regulatory Changes

1. Clearer Contract Pricing for Telco & Services

- Any fixed-term contract must clearly show the total price a consumer will pay, either:
 - as a full cumulative amount, or
 - as a per-period price alongside the number of periods.
- Advertisers must avoid “drip pricing,” or “partitioned pricing,” where mandatory fees appear late in the journey or are separated in a way that hides the real cost.

2. Mid-Term Price Changes

- If a contract includes a price change during the term:
 - You must display the future price in absolute £/p, not as a percentage or inflation linked formula.-linked formula.
- The future price must have equal prominence to the headline price.

3. Savings, “Was/Now” Prices & Comparisons

- Any “was” price or savings claim must reflect a genuine, established selling price.
- Comparisons must be fair, like-for-like, and verifiable.
- Promotional prices cannot be compared against a competitor’s “usual” price if that competitor is running its own promotion.

4. “Free” Claims

- The word “free” can only be used when the customer pays nothing other than unavoidable costs of responding or receiving the item.
- If a feature, item or benefit is baked into the main price, it must be described as inclusive, not free.

The ‘Three-in-One’ Rule: How to Present Prices

Every offer must show these three elements together, clearly and without emphasis on one over another:

- **Up-front costs:** For example: installation, activation, booking fees
- **Recurring costs:** Monthly, weekly or annual fees, already inclusive of mandatory components
- **Contract duration:** The number of periods, plus what happens after any introductory phase

This structure ensures consumers can immediately understand what they will pay and when.



Mid-Contract Price Changes (Telco & Services)

If any price will rise during the contract:

- Show the current price, the future price, and the exact date the change applies.
- This information must be visible no lower than one tier beneath the headline price, not hidden in fine print.
- Sector examples (energy, subscriptions, broadband, insurance, tickets) all follow the same principle: clear, upfront, £-based communication.

Compliant example for Telco

£27.99/month for 24 months. Rising to £29.99/month on 1 April 2026. Up-front cost £49.

Savings & Reference Prices

Established Prices Only

Savings claims must use:

- a price that has been charged for a meaningful period,
- not a short-term or artificially inflated “anchor” price.

Comparisons Must Be Verifiable

When comparing:

- Make the criteria explicit (same product, term length, features, fulfilment costs).
- Use like-for-like conditions and avoid selective presentation.

Common Issues

- Crossed-out prices that were never genuinely used
- “Was/Now” claims referencing brief or minimal sales history
- Promotional prices compared to competitors’ regular prices when the competitor is also promoting

Using “Free” Correctly

You may only use “free” when:

- there are no mandatory additional charges;
- the customer does not pay for the item via the main tariff or subscription.



Otherwise, use language such as:

- “included at no extra cost”
- “included in your plan”
- Bundles rarely justify “free”; clarity reduces consumer misunderstanding and regulatory risk.

Additional Fees & Delivery Charges

Mandatory Fees Must Be Included

If a consumer cannot complete a purchase without paying an extra fee (e.g., booking, admin, platform or network fees), this fee must:

- be included in the headline price, and
- clearly explained as part of the total cost.

Compliant example for Ticketing & Events:

Ticket £50 + mandatory £1 booking fee
-> advertised as £51 including £1 booking fee

Delivery Costs

- If delivery is mandatory, the delivery charge must be included in the total price.
- If a free collection option exists, delivery can be optional and shown separately, but still requires to be clear.

Compliant example for Retail:

Trainers “from £20” with a mandatory £4.99 delivery fee ->
must read as £24.99 including delivery

Subscription & Free-Trial Offers

Subscription brands must display:

1. The full ongoing price after the trial.
2. Auto-renewal terms.
3. Billing frequency (monthly/yearly).
4. Any minimum commitment.
5. Cancellation rights.

It is no longer compliant to emphasise the trial price and bury post-trial costs, as per example below:

Compliant example for Subscriptions:	Start your 30-day free trial – then £14.99/month. -> Automatically renews at £14.99/month. Price includes VAT. Cancel any time before the trial ends.
---	---

Compliance Checklist for Marketers

Use this list as a guide before approving any creative or displaying your product on-site:

1. One clear, inclusive price + contract length presented together
2. All compulsory up-front fees visible near the main price
3. Mid-contract or future price changes stated with equal prominence
4. Savings claims based on real, established prices
5. Comparisons are fair, verified, and like-for-like
6. “Free” used only when the product carries no cost
7. Total price includes all mandatory components, including delivery where applicable

Further Reading

- asa.org.uk/advice-online/broadband-and-telecoms-pricing-and-charges.html
 - ASA Website, 16th December 2025
- [Price transparency: CMA209](#)
 - Price Transparency CMA209, 18th November 2025
- [Providing clear and accurate information about prices: summary - GOV.UK](#)
 - Useful Flow chart of providing clear and accurate information about prices, 7th January 2026
- [Release: Chartered Institute of Marketing welcomes CMA’s new pricing guidance as a victory for professional standards | CIM](#)
 - Response from Chartered Institute of Marketing, 27th November 2025