



070 numbers used for Hospital bedside phones

The **fair telecoms campaign** offers some additional briefing and comment, further to a PA story entitled "HOSPITAL PATIENT TELEPHONE CALLS BRANDED A RIP-OFF".

Please get in touch for further information and comment.

The charges and the profit

The cost of calling a 070 number can extend well beyond the 50p per minute referred to in the PA copy. Even from BT the VAT inclusive charge is 51.062p per minute, but from some mobiles the charge exceeds £1 per minute.

We understand that Hospedia receives in the region of 39p per minute (excluding VAT) in all cases. This means that some telephone companies are making only a very modest margin on placing these calls, whereas others are blatantly profiteering.

Cease evading call cost transparency – switch to 09 numbers

Whatever the validity of Hospedia funding its services in this way, the key point is that by using 070 numbers it is evading the transparency that was brought to the cost of calling non-geographic numbers in July 2015.

With 084, 087, 09 and 118 numbers, the per minute rate taken by the caller's own telephone company (called the Access Charge) must be the same for all of these numbers. This is added to the "Service Charge" which must be declared wherever the number is published, as a per minute rate, per call charge or both.

We, in common with Ofcom, believe that Hospedia (and other companies) should switch to 09 numbers, rather than hiding their charges by using 070 numbers, which were never intended to be abused in this way.

The need for a personal bedside landline telephone has expired

Now that the general prohibition of use of mobile phones in hospitals has been lifted, the need for a personal bedside landline telephone has expired. We encourage all patients to take, or be given, a mobile phone (with a mains charger) to keep in touch with friends and relatives whilst in hospital.

For those who have no mobile phone, we are pressing Leagues of Hospital Friends to step forward to meet this need. We suggest that supporters could donate pre-used mobile phones to the League of Friends. These could be loaned to patients in need, fitted with free PAYG SIM-cards, so that a modest top-up would allow unlimited incoming calls.

