



New customer contact telephone number regulations - The Bad Guys vs. the Good Guys

Regulations introduced on Friday 13 June required numbers offered for telephone contact from customers to be those charged at the “basic rate”. See [the regulation](#) and [the related guidance](#).

Calls to numbers beginning 08 (e.g. 0845, 0844, 0871 and 0800) are not charged at the “basic rate”. If these numbers are offered they must be accompanied by **an alternative (01, 02 or 03) number**, which is charged at the basic rate, presented with equal prominence.

0800 numbers will become free to caller with effect from 29 June 2015, but are currently charged at up to 40p per minute from mobile phones. Many companies offering 0800 numbers to provide free calls for all landline callers therefore offer alternatives for mobile callers.

03 numbers provide the same facilities as 08 numbers but are, in all cases, charged at the same rate as calls to 01/02 numbers, or included in bundles or call plans on exactly the same terms. Many former users of 084 and 087 numbers have taken advantage of the option to migrate to the equivalent 034/037 number, i.e. changing only the second digit of the number from a ‘8’ to a ‘3’.

A formal determination of non-compliance in any specific case may only be **made by a court**, regardless of interpretations of the law made by ourselves and others.

Consumers may recover excess cost incurred from the trader and may report breaches to the **Citizens Advice Consumer Service** on 03454 04 05 06 (changed from 0845 ... on 12 June). **Trading Standards Officers** give advice to businesses and may intervene in serious cases.

The appended list shows **pairs of examples**, from various sectors, with links to web pages that give the customer contact numbers presented by those which have, and have not, complied.

These examples have been selected only to provide clear examples of the difference between compliance and non-compliance. Please note that this is **not a comprehensive list**, neither of business sectors affected nor of the cases that could be cited within each sector.

Please refer to the web pages given by the [links](#) and, if necessary, refer to the companies involved to ensure that the information provided on the web page is accurate and up to date.

The [Trading Standards Institute](#) can provide comments on its interpretation of the law.

The examples provided are as follows:

- **British Airways vs. Virgin Atlantic**
- **Cineworld, Everyman, Odeon, Showcase, Vue vs. Curzon**
- **British Gas vs. EDF Energy**
- **EE vs. Three**
- **Lloyds Pharmacy vs. Boots**
- **South West Trains vs. First Great Western**
- **Scottish Water, Southern Water, South West Water vs. Wessex Water, Northumbria Water**

We can offer many other examples if required.





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Air Travel

British Airways - [current](#) / [previous](#)

A 03 number has been added, but only for Customer Relations, a department dealing with complaints, but not all telephone contact with customers.

Virgin Atlantic - [current](#) / [previous](#)

084 numbers have been replaced with the 034 equivalents.

Cinema

Cineworld, Everyman, Odeon, Showcase, Vue

All telephone contact, including that following purchase of tickets, uses "premium rate service" 0871 numbers.

Curzon - [current](#)

The only telephone contact number offered is a basic rate 03 number.

Energy supply

British Gas - [current](#)

There are no alternatives to the 0800 numbers for use by mobile callers.

EDF Energy - [current](#)

Although it could be more prominently presented, there is an alternative to the 0800 numbers for use by mobile callers.

Mobile telecoms

EE - [current](#)

Charges apply at some or all times on calls to 150 and 450. Calls to the fixed base call centres on its own 07 numbers from other networks earn revenue and are commonly charged at a premium. Use of 084 numbers is explicitly prohibited.

Three - [current](#) / [previous](#) (showing the change ...

... see also [O2](#), [Virgin Mobile](#), [Vodafone](#))
03 numbers are now offered in place of 084 numbers for customer contact from any phone.

Pharmacies

Lloyds Pharmacy - [current](#)

Telephone contact continues to be offered using a 084 number.

Boots - [current](#) / [previous](#)

084 numbers have been changed to their 034 equivalents

Train Services

South West Trains - [current](#)

Whilst other Stagecoach Group companies (e.g. [Virgin Trains](#)) use 03 numbers, the 084 numbers have been retained.

First Great Western - [current](#) / [previous](#)

*With the exception of the services provided through **National Rail Enquiries**, all 084 numbers have been changed to their 034 equivalents.*

Water Supply

Scottish Water, Southern Water, South West Water

08 numbers (with no alternatives for 0800 numbers) are used exclusively.

Wessex Water - [current](#) / [previous](#),
Northumbria Water - [current](#) / [previous](#)

0845 numbers are replaced by the 0345 equivalents. Alternatives are offered for 0800 numbers.