



BBC Northern Ireland "ripping-off" phone-in callers, and allowing license-fee payers to be "ripped-off" as well

NHS GP rip-off in Northern Ireland

Last year the **fair telecoms campaign** was represented on the **BBC1 TV** series "**Rip-off Britain**", explaining about the many NHS GPs using **084** telephone numbers - [see the item here](#).

We can report that this "**rip-off**" extends to Northern Ireland, as there are at least 7 NHS GP practices in Northern Ireland also using **084** numbers to practice what the BBC calls a "**rip-off**".

Flax Centre	Ardoyne Avenue, Belfast BT14 7DA	0844 477 3459
The Health Centre	Robinson Memorial Hospital, Ballymoney BT53 6HH	0844 477 3835
The Health Centre	36 Garvagh Road, Kilrea, Coleraine BT51 5QP	0844 576 9226
Three Spires Surgery	The Health Centre,	0844 477 3501
Grange Family Practice	Mountjoy Road,	0844 477 3503
Strule Medical	Omagh	0844 477 3504
Drumragh Family Practice	BT79 7BA	0844 477 3513

BBC rip-off in Northern Ireland?

We must draw attention to the fact that the BBC itself also engages in this same activity. Listeners who phone-in to **BBC Ulster** and **BBC Foyle** shows, including **The Nolan Show**, are invited to call **08459 555 678**. This number is also used by the network BBC1 TV show **Sunday Morning Live**.

Since 1 July, new **Ofcom** rules make the rip-offs involved with these numbers clearer to identify. The charges, which were previously bundled together into a single figure, are now separated:

- £ The "**Service Charge**" - to the benefit of the person called - this must be declared whenever the number is promoted. In this case the rate is **2p per minute**.
- £ The "**Access Charge**" - to the benefit of the caller's telephone company - a single rate is set for each telephone tariff and applies to all calls to expensive (084/087/09/118) numbers.

BT charges **10p per minute**, **EE** (including **Orange** and **T-Mobile**) charges **44p per minute**.

The two are added to give the cost of the call. A listener with an **Orange** mobile phone would be paying **46p per minute** to tell **Stephen Nolan** about how expensive it is to call his show!

The **Service Charge** is collected by the telephone company providing the service - in the case of **BBC Northern Ireland** it is **Vodafone**.

The **Access Charge** is set by each telephone company to cover calls from its customers to all expensive numbers, including Chat Lines and Directory Enquiry services.

I must quote from the formal statement issued by **BBC Northern Ireland**:

"The BBC does not generate, or receive, any income from its use of an 0845 number".

This implies that the **BBC** allows **Vodafone** to keep the **2p per minute Service Charge**, rather than recovering it for the sake of licence-fee payers.

It seems to us that someone is getting "ripped-off" here!

Why has this number not been switched to 03459 555 678? - like other BBC numbers