

**BT Call Protect blocks real HMRC calls ...
because they are treated as Nuisance**

The BT Call Protect Service is blocking calls used to deliver the Access Code which is required in order to log on to the HMRC website. (These are genuine, not the fake “HMRC” scam calls.)

When **BT** recently launched the “free” **Call Protect** service, 3 days before announcing a [price rise](#), we [expressed concerns](#) about its value and effectiveness.

In common with many banks and other services, **HMRC** uses a “2-step verification” technique when signing in. An Access Code is delivered independently and has to be entered to continue.

Whilst many people use the option for the Access Code to be delivered in a SMS text message to their mobile, those who have a landline may choose to receive it through an automated call to their number. These options are commonly offered and generally work fine.

Unfortunately, **HMRC** fails to respect one of the basic courtesies in use of the telephone as it does not provide any Calling Line Identification (CLI) when making this call. Many **BT Call Protect** users follow the advice of **BT** and choose for all calls from “unknown” numbers to be blocked.

Whilst it is common for important calls to be made with the number “withheld”, the vast majority of calls made with no CLI at all will be Nuisance Calls, and are therefore sensibly blocked. (The **fair telecoms campaign** urges those who block all calls from “withheld” numbers to ensure that there is a way for important callers, who may legitimately withhold their number, to get through.

We call on **BT** to advise **Call Protect** customers on the important implications of choosing to use the various aspects of its service. We regard the blocking of calls on the basis of the CLI as an over-simplistic approach to avoiding nuisance calls. It is easily circumvented by nuisance callers, and can have unintended consequences, as in this case. We also [commend a more effective approach](#), which **BT** has available to it.

We call on **HMRC** to honour its duties as a responsible user of the telephone system and provide CLI when making these calls to deliver Access Codes. The number to be used should be given when advising that the call will be made, so that those with Caller Display will recognise the call when it arrives.

If necessary, those who use effective call filtering solutions, such as “**trueCall**” or (by its BT name) “**Call Guardian**”, could temporarily add this number to their list of trusted callers.

Notes

1. For those who can receive SMS messages through their landline (commonly through an automated reading service) – it is possible to select the **HMRC** “Mobile” option and enter their landline number. This is one way of circumventing the problem.
2. There have been reports of **BT Call Protect** blocking **HMRC** calls in cases where the option to block “unknown” numbers was NOT selected. These need to be investigated.
3. Our comments on the recent **BT** price rise are brought into stronger focus by the **Ofcom** announcement of measures to address the pricing of services to landline-only customers. See [this further news release](#).

