

fair telecoms campaign

news release



BT capitalises on public hatred of Nuisance Calls

At a time when concern about Nuisance Calls is at a peak, **BT** has chosen to capitalise on this by increasing its revenue from measures taken to minimise the nuisance.

Privacy - at a price

The **BT6500 Nuisance Call Blocker phone** was launched this year, offering only minimal features that may block both wanted and some unwanted calls. **BT** is earning revenue from sales of this modestly effective remedy; however it relies on the **Caller Display** facility on the telephone line.

This facility is provided as part of "BT Privacy at Home", a feature which has been free since it was launched in 2005 - allegedly as a means of preventing competitors from winning business from BT customers through telemarketing.

From 4 January 2014, the BT Privacy at Home service will be charged at £1.75 per month. All BT customers who bought the BT6500 phone and registered for this service will pay this fee by default. They can avoid it, for a year, by signing up to a new 12 month contract with BT.

This move affects users of other call blocking and filtering devices that rely on **Caller Display** to allow known callers to get through, whilst others are impeded or blocked. We are concerned about this additional cost to the most vulnerable, who can only handle calls from known callers.

Charging for the Telephone Preference Service

BT privacy at Home also provides registration with the **Telephone Preference Service**. The **TPS** website provides the following warnings:

- " The Telephone Preference Service is completely free to consumers
- Beware of Unregulated Companies Charging For Their Service!

Call monitoring - new charge

BT advises that the BT Answer 1571 service can provide a simple means of filtering calls.

This currently free service will be subject to a charge of £1.75 per month from 4 January 2014.

Special features - price increase

Two services which are specifically offered to assist victims of nuisance calls will have their prices increased from 4 January 2014.

- ◆ Choose to refuse blocking of calls from specific sources, from £3.70 to £3.90 (+5.6%)
- ♦ Anonymous Caller Reject blocking all calls without a number, from £4.50 to £4.75 (+5.4%)

BT plays a leading role on working groups looking at ways to address the issue of Nuisance Calls. Perhaps it sees this as a market of vulnerable people, ripe for commercial exploitation.

BT's contribution will be noted by the Culture Media and Sport Committee and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Nuisance Calls, both of which are conducting formal inquiries.

