

**Government agrees to end Public Sector use of expensive telephone numbers**

On Boxing Day, the **Cabinet Office** has published Guidance to all Government Departments to mark the end of improper use of expensive telephone numbers across the Public Sector.

The guidance for the public sector

[Published here](#), the guidance bans use of 084/087 or any of the other expensive types of number. The only exceptions are the few cases where a charge may be validly imposed for a specialist information service and the retention of some old numbers as a SECONDARY alternative to the proper number, for the benefit of those who have perverse tariff arrangements under the out of date regulatory system that will shortly be replaced. All such exceptional cases must be justified to the **Cabinet Office**.

The only acceptable numbers will be those beginning 01, 02 OR 03 - charged at geographic rate, including in call plans and bundles and therefore generally "free" to call.

080 numbers may be used in particular circumstances. Until new rules come in to effect in 2015, these are generally NOT FREE for all callers, and thereby not generally acceptable.

We expect all national and local government departments to announce their plans for moving to compliance early in the New Year. **DWP** will be at the front of this, along with other notable services such as the **Environment Agency Floodline**. The guidance also covers services delivered by contractors, such as the **Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline** and the **Student Loans Company**.

Completing our campaigning success in 2013

Much work remains for the **fair telecoms campaign** in 2014. Compliance with Guidance and Regulations must be ensured, but the situation is now understood and the policy agenda is set.

084/087 numbers are used to impose a Service Charge on callers, and are therefore inappropriate for many types of telephone contact

This has been applied through the following recent actions:

- ☑ **Ofcom**'s announcement of the implementation of the "unbundled tariff", requiring Service Charges to be declared - see "[Telephone call charges to be made simpler](#)".
- ☑ Clear adoption of this principle by **BIS** in its implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive - see "[Government cuts off costly calls](#)"
- ☑ Removal of ambiguity and confirmation of enforcement action by **NHS England** in relation to the ban on use of 084/087 numbers that was imposed on GPs in 2010 - see "[NHS England calls on GPs to end use of expensive 084 numbers](#)".
- ☑ A Statement from the **Financial Conduct Authority** indicating its readiness to proceed with a similar ban on use of 084/087 numbers in the Financial Services sector. This has been preceded by proactive confirmation from some banks and insurance companies that they have started, or will be, abandoning use of 084/087 numbers, voluntarily.
- ☑ Many public bodies and businesses switching from 084 to 034 numbers, retaining the rest of the number. This enables removal of an improper charge, but with minimal disruption.

