



Citizens B Advice
(The Sun - 5 April 2014)

NEWS

Citizens badvice

- Helpline for hard-up is 41p a min
- Fury as needy pay price again



Sun man with Rip-Offscar
Neil Hall





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EXCLUSIVE By **DANIEL JONES, Consumer Editor** Published: 05th April 2014

A HELPLINE for hard-up families to get advice on benefits, debts and consumer rip-offs is charging up to 41p A MINUTE.

The government-backed service Citizens Advice uses 0844 and 0845 numbers.

It is the latest scandalous rip-off of poorer families exposed by our big campaign.

The calls cost up to 41p a minute for mobile users while it is up to 13p on a landline.

Most companies and government departments are now banned from using 08 numbers, but Citizens Advice has somehow slipped through the net.

And yesterday the charity landed The Sun's Rip-Offscar for the charges. Our own Del Boy went to its London HQ to present the award — but after arriving in the lobby he was told chief executive Gillian Guy refused to accept it.



Gillian Guy said 'No' to Sun award
Rex

In a bizarre twist, The Sun can reveal that families wanting to report organisations flouting the ban on 0845 numbers have to call Citizens Advice on an 0845 number.



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The organisation has taken over key government helpline services including Consumer Futures, for post and energy problems, and Consumer Direct, for benefits and shops.

Citizens Advice has even blasted other bodies over 08 numbers.

David Hickson, of the Fair Telecoms Campaign, said it "cannot ever be right for advice charities to charge their clients".

He added: "Government must provide Citizens Advice with the funding it needs to operate telephone services, without subsidy at the expense of callers."

Labour MP Frank Field, who backs our Rip-Off Britain campaign, went on: "It is such a monstrous practice that I am sure now The Sun has pointed this out they will change it."

On its website Citizens Advice says it uses the numbers to "cover the cost of running our telephone services".

Head of phone services Michele Shambrook added last night: "As a charity we have never made any profit from our phone line."

Call costs rack up

CRIPPLING calls to 08 numbers cost up to 41p per minute from a mobile phone and 13p a minute from a landline.

For its UK offices, Citizens Advice use 0844 numbers — which charge mobile users between 20p and 41p a minute and landline users up to the maximum 13p.

Calling an 0845 number, used for Citizens Advice national helplines, costs up to 11p a minute from a landline. Connection fees for landlines are up to 15p. Calls from a mobile cost between 14p and 41p per minute.

Cheek to complain

CITIZENS Advice hypocrites have previously blasted the Government for using expensive 08 numbers for its helplines.

A report by a branch in Leeds said hard-up people got deeper into debt using mobiles to call the helplines and accused Whitehall of victimising "the poorest people".

It even suggested the 08 numbers should be swapped for free 0300 lines. But the service clearly does not heed its own advice.

see also:

[Citizens follow Advice](#)