



Citizens follow advice  
(The Sun 7 April 2014)

NEWS

# Citizens follow advice

## Sun forces charity to ditch rip-off helplines

EXCLUSIVE By DANIEL JONES, Consumer Editor Published: 07th April 2014

**CITIZENS Advice yesterday agreed to halt its use of premium-rate phone numbers in a major victory for our Rip-Off Britain campaign.**

The lines — which cost callers up to 41p a minute — will be replaced with mainly free calls within months, the charity vowed.

The Sun will now take back the Rip-Offscar presented to Citizens Advice — following its climbdown.

**We told on Saturday how the charity was still using pricey 0844 and 0845 numbers, even though these have been banned for private firms and Government departments.**

*Our Del Boy visited the London HQ to present a Rip-Offscar — awarded to firms that fleece the needy — to chief executive Gillian Guy.*

But the charity has now said “nearly all” of its help-lines will move to 03 numbers by September. It will get Government financial help to make the switch.

David Hickson, of the Fair Telecoms Campaign, said: “It is great the Rip-Off Britain campaign has got such a quick result.

“We are delighted that Citizens Advice has been able to secure extra government funding to stop ripping off those it serves with pricey phone lines.”

03 calls are free for most people as they are usually included in price plans, like normal calls to 01 and 02 landlines. On the rare occasions they are not free, they cost 10p a minute — the same as 01 and 02 calls not covered by a package.

And unlike the old 084 numbers, firms using 03 numbers cannot take a cut of the proceeds.

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Our report on phone numbers

Michele Shambrook, head of telephone services at Citizens Advice, said: “By September, almost all of our phonelines will run from 03 numbers. This means calling our helplines will cost no more than calls to a geographic number.”

Until the change comes in, Mrs Shambrook said: “There are lots of ways to get free help from Citizens Advice including at our bureaux and online.

*“We help millions of people each year with millions of problems including getting bailiffs off their back and taking on firms who have ripped them off.”*

The Sun revealed on Saturday that Citizens Advice was still using the 084 numbers that will be outlawed from June 13.

Calls were costing up to 41p a minute from a mobile and up to 13p a minute from a landline.

Ironically, consumers calling to complain about 08 scams had to call Citizens Advice on an expensive 0845 number.

The charity will get help with the switch after taking over government helpline services including Consumer Futures, for post and energy problems, and Consumer Direct, for benefits and shops.