

**Consumers getting ripped-off on Customer Service lines**

This release covers two ways in which consumers are being ripped-off when using 084 and 087 numbers for customer service. The coalition government announced in 2013 that this was to be halted - [Government cuts off costly calls](#) - but it still continues.

Companies that fail to comply with the regulations

The regulations prohibiting use of 084 and 087 numbers for customer service lines were introduced on 13 June 2014, ahead of major changes covering these numbers that were introduced by Ofcom on 1 July 2015.

The relevant Implementation Guidance covered situations which applied ONLY during this interim period, but the Guidance has not been updated. This is one reason why some companies are continuing to operate illegal customer service numbers, others simply ignore the regulations.

See [our briefing on the issues, including a proposed schedule of minimal changes](#).

Examples were covered and the issues clearly explained in a You and Yours broadcast on 12 July 2017 – [listen here](#). This item was prepared in conjunction with the **fair telecoms campaign** in follow-up to an earlier item on a similar topic – [“Rip-off ticket booking numbers”](#).

Our key point on this issue is the fact that any company using a 084 / 087 number is gaining a benefit of no more than 10.83p per minute (13p less VAT) whilst causing callers to pay between 12p per minute (on a landline) and up to 55p per minute (on a mobile) to their telephone company through the Access Charge which forms part of the cost of calling these numbers.

For this reason we class this behaviour as **“greedy and foolish”**. [See our briefing](#).

We have many examples of all types, notably [Rip-off surcharge on local authority payment lines](#), [‘Free’ Charity Helplines that impose “Service Charges” on callers by use of 084 / 087 numbers](#) and [un-Fair Telecoms league table](#).

Un-regulated Premium rate (Call Connection) services

Anyone searching the internet for a customer service number for any organisation is likely to come across many “Call Connection Services” promoting 084, 087 or 09 numbers for organisations that themselves have clearly advised “basic rate” 01/02/03, or even free-to caller 080, numbers.

Those using 087 or 09 numbers are subject to regulation by the Phone-paid Services Authority. We believe that the terms of this regulation needs to be tightened and compliance better enforced.

Because of the way in which the regulatory powers are currently structured, when these services are provided using 084 numbers they escape PSA regulation. There is a simple remedy for this, which requires addition of this category of service to a list issued by Ofcom.

See our briefing on the issue, which accompanied a clear request for Ofcom to make the necessary change - [The ICSS ‘rip-off’ continues, due to a loophole in regulations](#).

Attention has been drawn to this issue by a recent item in the Mail on Sunday - [£250 bill trying to call Vodafone: Mobile phone users warned over searching for customer service numbers online](#)

