

In reply to a question from John Healey MP, DWP Minister Mark Hoban has provided a written answer listing the enquiry and claims line numbers used by his department.




The answer is found in Hansard: [17 October cols 350W - 355W](#).

This release explains, summarises and comments on the detailed information given.

The 163 numbers listed fall into three types:

- A. 0800 numbers covered by the additional arrangement with the nine leading mobile companies to be genuinely “free to caller”, or used for landline-only textphone services. Call charges are paid by the DWP. [22]
- B. 0800 numbers not covered by this arrangement; free from landlines but charged from mobile companies. Call charges are (also) paid by the DWP. [11]
- C. 0845 numbers. Calls to **all 0845 numbers** are subject to a **Service Charge** of 2p per minute to the benefit of the person called (**the DWP**), as well as an **Access Charge** of up to 39p per minute to the benefit of the **caller's telephone company**. (BT collects the 0845 Service Charge from all subscribers through its Call Plan fees, whether or not they call these numbers. BT is currently prohibited from adding an Access Charge.) [130]

The breakdown of number types for the various categories of DWP services is as follows:

<b>Category</b>	<i>The grid shows how many numbers of each type are listed for each category</i>	A - 	B - 	C - 
Jobcentre Plus Claims Lines		6		
Jobcentre Plus Enquiries - National (England and Wales)				<b>34</b>
Jobcentre Plus Primary Benefit Enquiries (local offices)				<b>73</b>
Jobcentre Plus Fraud Hotlines		2	4	
Disability and Carers Benefits and Pension Claims Lines		14	7	
Pensions, Disability and Carers Service Enquiries				<b>20</b>
Debt Management Service				<b>3</b>

## Numbers which impose a Service Charge

Ofcom will shortly be announcing the detail of forthcoming regulations, to require users of 0845 numbers to provide a message in the following form, wherever the number is given:

**Calls cost 2p per minute, plus a charge added by your telephone company**

Many supportive regulations will be applied, in particular to ensure the simplification and declaration of the telephone companies’ Access Charges.

The statement given above however represents the truth of the situation as it stands today.

*(Further detail on the figures highlighted in red is given below)*

## Chargeable DWP Services

Users of the following telephone enquiry services incur a "Service Charge", to the benefit of DWP, and an "Access Charge" set by their telephone company.

Calls to:

- Jobcentre Plus Switchboard
- Local Jobcentre Plus benefit enquiry offices
- Pensions Service
- Health and Safety Executive
- "Employer Direct"
- "Jobseeker Direct"
- UK Borders Agency (status validation)

or specifically regarding:

- Pensions - current / future / workplace / international / equalisation
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit to ESA Migration
- Maternity Allowance
- Social Fund
- Winter Fuel Allowance
- The "Benefit Cap"
- Sanctions that limit benefits
- National Insurance numbers
- use of Self Service systems
- Debt management

## Questions for us all

We have to ask ourselves, as a society:

? *Is it proper to impose charges on those who make these enquiries by telephone?*

If we think that a charge is proper, then we have further questions to answer:

? *Should we impose the charge in a way that also benefits the telephone companies?*

? *Should the charge represent as little as 5% of the cost of handling the call?*

## Conclusion

Migration of all of these 0845 numbers to their 0345 equivalents is long overdue.

We find it ironic that the government is currently consulting on proposals to prevent businesses from imposing Service Charges on customer enquiries by telephone. It appears to regard pensioners and others entitled to benefits as deserving of worse treatment.