

Introduction

NHS organisations and contractors in England and Wales are not allowed to use telephone numbers that cost callers more to ring than it costs them to call local geographic numbers. Whilst the regulations do not specify any forbidden number types explicitly, all those prefixed with the digits 084 are not allowed in practice. This is because providers charge more to ring them than they do for geographic calls on the same tariffs.

This document addresses this point, providing the necessary evidence with reference to any use of 0844 and 0845 numbers.

The types of 084x numbers used by NHS providers and other organisations

There are different 084x prefixes used by NHS providers, such as GPs and hospitals, and other organisations such as DWP. Call providers often charge different rates for each, so for this reason, within this document, the 084x numbers are separated into the following three categories:

- All 0845 numbers – This includes some NHS services, as well as the vast majority of DWP agencies and Citizens Advice Consumer Service.
- 0844 numbers within charge-band g11 which are those that start 0844 387 – Some NHS GPs use this type of number.
- 0844 numbers within charge-band g6 which are those that start 0844 375, 0844 414, 0844 477, 0844 499, 0844 576, 0844 811, 0844 815 and 0844 880 – Many NHS GPs use this type of number, as do a few hospital trusts and many Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Note that the call price distinction between different 0844 sub-prefixes only affects landline services.

Our evidence

The rates paid by callers to any number are set by their respective providers of telephony. Those providers act as the retailers as far as calling is concerned. This means that not only can the users of 084x numbers not have any influence on them, but their own phone providers cannot do so either. This applies equally to GP surgeries and their telephone providers!

We have researched call pricing literature from a number of popular fixed line, mobile telephony and public payphone providers. Our exhibits accompany this document and we have added annotations to help you with interpretation, as they can be difficult to fathom out. The pages also carry explanations of how to access source documents on the internet, for verification purposes.

The rates for calling geographic and 03xx, and 084x numbers have been tabulated and instances where it is more expensive to ring the latter have been highlighted.





Call rates table

The call rates are presented in the table which follows. For each phone provider, the number in the left-hand column is a hyper-link to the relevant exhibit within the counterpart PDF document of exhibits.

The rates shown apply during providers’ respective weekday daytime periods.

Prices highlighted in red indicate instances where it is more expensive to ring the respective 0844 or 0845 number than to make an equivalent call to a geographic or 03xx number.

Exhibit	Service type	Provider	Package/ tariff	Charges during weekday daytimes				Which 084 numbers cost more?	
				Geographic/03	0845	0844 g11	0844 g6		
1	Landline	BT	Anytime	inclusive	inclusive	15p + 4.084ppm	15p + 5.105ppm	0844	
			Weekend	15p + 9ppm	15p + 2.042ppm	15p + 4.084ppm	15p + 5.105ppm	none	
			Basic ¹	inclusive	3.2p + 4.032ppm	3.2p + 4.084ppm	3.2p + 5.105ppm	0845 and 0844	
2	Landline	O2 Home Phone	Anytime	inclusive	inclusive	12.8p + 9.2ppm	12.8p + 10.6ppm	0844	
			Eve. & W'kend	12.8p + 6ppm	12.8p + 4.1ppm	12.8p + 9.2ppm	12.8p + 10.6ppm	0844	
3	Landline	Phone Co-op	Anytime	inclusive	inclusive	12.5p + 6.39ppm	12.5p + 7.18ppm	0844	
4	Landline	Primus Saver	Phone Max	inclusive		13.4p + 8ppm	13.4p + 4.08ppm	13.4p + 5.11ppm	0845 and 0844
5	Landline	Sky Talk	Anytime	inclusive		13.87p + 6.63ppm	13.87p + 4.09ppm	13.87p + 6.62ppm	0845 and 0844
			Freetime	13.87p + 8.9ppm	13.87p + 6.63ppm	13.87p + 4.09ppm	13.87p + 6.62ppm	none	
6	Landline	TalkTalk	Anytime	inclusive	inclusive	15p + 6.64ppm	15p + 6.62ppm	0844	
			Eve. & W'kend	15p + 9ppm	15p + 9ppm	15p + 6.64ppm	15p + 6.62ppm	none	
7	Landline	Virgin Media	Unlimited	inclusive		11.24p + 10.22ppm	15.94p + 8.16ppm	15.94p + 12.41ppm	0845 and 0844
			Eve. & W'kend	15.94p + 9.94ppm	11.24p + 10.22ppm ²	15.94p + 8.16ppm	15.94p + 12.41ppm	0844 g6	

1 BT Basic is available to some on low incomes who are in receipt of certain state benefits and who meet certain criteria. For more information see www.bt.com/btbasic.

2 A call to a 0845 number from a Virgin Media Talk Evening & Weekends line is only more expensive when the duration exceeds 17 minutes. This is due to the lower Connection Fee on that number prefix and Virgin Media’s duration and call price rounding policies. For charging purposes, any part minute of a call duration is rounded up to the next whole minute. The Connection Fee is then added and any call charge which has a fraction is rounded up to the next whole penny for billing purposes.



Exhibit	Service type	Provider	Package/ tariff	Charges during weekday daytimes			Which 084 numbers cost more?
				Geographic/03	0845	0844	
8	Mobile	3	Pay Monthly	inclusive	20.4ppm/35ppm³	20.4ppm/35ppm³	0845 and 0844
			Pay as you Go	3ppm	35ppm	35ppm	0845 and 0844
9	Mobile	02	Pay Monthly	inclusive	20.4ppm	20.4ppm	0845 and 0844
			Pay as you Go	25/5ppm ⁴	25ppm⁵	25ppm⁵	0845⁵ and 0844⁵
10	Mobile	Orange	Pay Monthly	inclusive	35ppm	35ppm	0845 and 0844
			Pay as you Go	25ppm/14ppm ³	12ppm	40ppm	0844
11	Mobile	T-Mobile	Pay Monthly	inclusive	inclusive	inclusive	none
			Pay as you Go	35ppm	40ppm	40ppm	0845 and 0844
12	Mobile	Virgin Mobile	Pay Monthly	inclusive	41ppm	41ppm	0845 and 0844
			Pay as you Go	35ppm	41ppm	41ppm	0845 and 0844
13	Mobile	Vodafone	Pay Monthly	inclusive	14ppm	35ppm	0845 and 0844
14	Public Payphone	BT Payphones		40p + 0.67ppm	40p + 20ppm⁶	40p + 20ppm⁶	0845⁶ and 0844⁶

Our exhibits of call providers' pricing literature

The exhibits that accompany this document are of pricing literature from a selection of call providers. Each exhibit includes the following:

- A number and title in a red box at the top of the page.
- A red cloud which contains instructions on how to view the exhibit on the internet.
- Highly relevant text is highlighted with a yellow background.
- Annotations in blue boxes which help explain how to interpret the information.

³ Exact rate is dependent on the subscriber's selected tariff.

⁴ 25ppm for the first three minutes of qualifying calls each day, then 5ppm for all minutes thereafter. Qualifying calls are to 01, 02 and 03 numbers and 02 mobiles.

⁵ A call to a 0844 or 0845 number is more expensive when the sum of its duration and the duration of any Qualifying calls made on the same day is greater than three minutes. See Footnote 4 for which calls qualify for the lower 5 pence per minute.

⁶ A call to a 0844 or 0845 number from a BT Payphone is only more expensive than an equivalent call to a geographic number where the call lasts for more than a minute.



Guidance notes

Telephone services notes

The following notes explain general trends of services, as well as dispelling potential myths. They are intended to be helpful to your understanding, but not essential.

Landline services notes

- Local and national calls usually cost the same (and are often inclusive) on any tariff or package. Thus, there are largely no differing local and national rates for each subscriber; only differing geographic rates across different telephone packages.
- Non-inclusive calls usually attract call set-up or connection fees. These are shown alongside the pence per minute rates in the table.
- The rates in this table are those that apply during respective providers' weekday daytime time periods.
- The pricing structure of packages and the cost of non-inclusive calls means that the normal incidental charge for a geographic or 03 call is zero.

Mobile phone services notes

- Pay monthly packages always come with bundled call minutes, and in some instances these provide “unlimited” calls to landlines.
- Many pay as you go service users have the option to purchase add-ons that offer bundled minutes.
- It is invariably so that inclusive minutes do not extend to ringing 0844 and 0845 numbers. This means that they cost more, due to them being chargeable, in such cases.

Public payphone services notes

- All chargeable calls incur a minimum charge of 60 pence, which includes a 40 pence connection charge.
- Additional call time is purchased in 10 pence units.
- The relevant page of the BT Price List gives the number of seconds allowed for each unit, rather than pence per minute rates. We have converted these into equivalent pence per minute rates.



Conclusion

In the case of the NHS in England and Wales, 0844 and/or 0845 numbers are not permitted, except in cases where there is evidence that callers do not, and will never, subscribe to any of the following services (and maybe others). We think that there is no chance of this!

For users of 0844 numbers:

Where calls are made from telephone services subscribed to any of the following providers' packages, **0844 numbers** are more expensive:

- Landlines:
 - **BT Unlimited Anytime Calls Calling Plan** – BT announced in August 2011 that this is its most popular package with more than 3.5 million customers⁷. Also, **BT Basic** which is BT's special social tariff for some on low incomes and in receipt of certain state benefits.
 - **O2 Home Phone Anytime** and **O2 Evening & Weekend** packages.
 - **Phone Co-op Anytime** package.
 - **Primus Saver Phone Max**, which is its anytime inclusive package.
 - **Sky Talk Anytime** package.
 - **TalkTalk Anytime** package.
 - **Virgin Media Talk Unlimited** and **Virgin Media Talk Evening & Weekends** packages (with the exception of g11 numbers on Evenings & Weekends).

⁷ BT press release "BT announces price updates – then freezes key prices until 2013", ref. DC11-199, dated 27th August 2011: <http://www.btplc.com/News/Articles/Showarticle.cfm?ArticleID=FF343DA2-2CB2-47DF-AE45-385F50D5105A>

- Mobiles:
 - **3 Pay Monthly** and **3 Pay as you Go**.
 - **02 Pay Monthly**. Also, **02 Pay as you Go** where, on the same day, the combined duration of the call to the 0845 number and any proceeding calls made to 01, 02 and 03 numbers, as well as 02 mobiles, is greater than three minutes.
 - **Orange Pay Monthly** and **Orange Pay as you Go**.
 - **T-Mobile Pay as you Go**.
 - **Virgin Mobile Pay Monthly** and **Virgin Mobile Pay as you Go**.
 - **Vodafone Pay Monthly**.
- Public payphones:
 - **BT Payphones** where calls last longer than a minute.

For users of 0845 numbers:

Where calls are made from telephone services subscribed to any of the following providers' packages, **0845 numbers** are more expensive:

- Landlines:
 - **BT Basic**, which is BT's special social tariff for some on low incomes and in receipt of certain state benefits.
 - **Primus Saver Phone Max**, which is its anytime inclusive package.
 - **Sky Talk Anytime** package.
 - **Virgin Media Talk Unlimited**. Those on the Talk Evening & Weekends package pay more only for calls that exceed 15 minutes.

- Mobiles:
 - **3 Pay Monthly** and **3 Pay as you Go**.
 - **02 Pay Monthly**. Also, **02 Pay as you Go** where, on the same day, the combined duration of the call to the 0845 number and any proceeding calls made to 01, 02 and 03 numbers, as well as 02 mobiles, is greater than three minutes.
 - **Orange Pay Monthly**.
 - **T-Mobile Pay as you Go**.
 - **Virgin Mobile Pay Monthly** and **Virgin Mobile Pay as you Go**.
 - **Vodafone Pay Monthly**.
- Public payphones:
 - **BT Payphones**, for calls that last longer than a minute.

All 084x numbers are banned for NHS providers

The Fair Telecoms Campaign feels that this extensive list demonstrates, beyond reasonable doubt, that, as a whole, people do pay more to call such numbers. We cannot know, without asking of course, which tariff each individual is subscribed to. However, it is fair to say that the likelihood that not one patient of a particular surgery will subscribe to any of the highlighted tariffs is infinitesimally small!

