

**Fair Telecoms Campaign VICTORY -
'Clear Call Rates for Everyone' exposes the rip-offs****FOR USE FROM WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2015 00:01**Please see - [Call charges clearer from Wednesday](#)

Since 12 December 2013, when [Ofcom announced the changes in regulation](#), which come into effect today (Wednesday 1 July), organisations have been moving away from 084/087 numbers.

This has included, barring a few exceptional particular cases, all central government departments - [guidance published 26 December 2013](#), most "traders" - covered by regulations introduced in June 2014 ([announced 13 December 2013](#)) and leading high street banks - ahead of belated changes to FCA regulations (yet to be announced, but [announced as due immediately in April 2014!](#)).

Those who continue to use these numbers will henceforward have to justify the imposition of a "Service Charge" on callers, which they will now have to declare.

Why is the change necessary

Most people already understand that a 09 number is used to generate an income for the provider of the service offered by it and that the cost of a call to a 118 number includes a charge for the service of compiling and holding a directory and finding the number we want. The fact that **all 084 and 087 numbers work in exactly the same way**, providing a subsidy towards the costs of the organisation answering the call, at our expense, is only now being recognised beyond doubt.

The **fair telecoms campaign** argues that when such a charge is valid, then it should be declared as such, without shame. Very many organisations have however long been using 084/087 numbers in cases where the charge is unjustified and its existence even denied. This deceit is compounded by the telephone companies (who also benefit from these numbers being used), through use of phrases such as "Lo-call rate". Some even include calls to these numbers in call packages, so that the premium cost is met by all package subscribers, rather than just those who call the numbers.

How it will work

Each of the two components of the cost of calling 'Service numbers' (084/087/09/118) is constant. Each will now be declared by the party which benefits.

£ The **Service Charge** - to the benefit of the person called

£ The **Access Charge** - to the benefit of the telephone company originating the call

Many organisations have stopped using 084/087 numbers - **because they cannot justify imposing a charge on callers** - and they knew what was coming. Much of our victory has already been seen.

"Our" victory

We have been pressing for these changes since submitting [a response to the initial "call for inputs"](#) from **Ofcom** in May 2010. I proposed that 080 calls be made truly "free to caller" and that the premium incurred when calling 084 numbers (now known as the "**Service Charge**") be clearly stated in addition to the standard call charge rate (now known as the "**Access Charge**").

Ofcom has actually ended up being more radical than my proposal. It has had to fight off heavy resistance from the telecoms industry before bringing the new regime into effect - more than 5 years later. Obviously, we have supported **Ofcom** all the way - on this issue!

David Hickson

Tuesday, 30 June 2015



**Fair Telecoms Campaign VICTORY -
'Clear Call Rates for Everyone' exposes the rip-offs**

'Clear call rates' - the next steps

- We deeply regret the fact that telephone companies are still permitted to collect the **Service Charge** from those who do not call 'Service Numbers' - **by including them in the terms of call plans and bundles**. This undermines the clarity demanded by these changes.

We hope that this gross unfairness will now be seen as the rip-off that it has always been, rather than a consumer benefit, and hastily withdrawn. Any attempt to justify this action, e.g. on the basis that 0845 numbers were widely used by government departments and consumer help lines, is no longer true.

- There are still many who are using 084/087 numbers with **no valid justification** for the **Service Charge**. There are even some who are doing so in breach of directions, regulations or contractual terms (i.e. public bodies, "traders" and NHS GPs).

This impropriety or breach will now be seen more clearly. It will therefore be much easier to get the situation rectified in every case.

- **Ofcom** has some other number ranges to attend to, in due course. For example, there are gross abuses of the **070 range (personal numbers)**. This is a longstanding problem and it must now be addressed effectively.

There are many other cases of this abuse, but that of the hospital bedside phone providers is probably the most significant.

- The **premium charge paid when calling mobile phones from landlines** should be in the process of falling away to zero. Progressive annual reductions in the amount paid by telephone companies are however not being fully reflected in falling retail call charges.

We look forward to the day when calling a standard mobile number will be on the same terms as calling a standard landline number. This should not now be too far off.

- Most calls to ordinary numbers are made under the terms of a call plan or call bundle (i.e. with no "call charge"). The "**penalty charges**" for **non-inclusive calls to ordinary numbers** are very high and are commonly suffered by those who are unaware that they have not selected the best plan for their needs. Even though they apply to a minority of actual cases, these "**penalty charge**" rates are too often presented as if they were the standard charge for this type of call.

"**Penalty charge**" rates should be more clearly presented as what they truly are. More help is needed to protect unwary consumers from paying far too much for their telephone service.

Despite declaring and celebrating a great campaigning victory - fulfilment of 5 years of specific effort, there is plenty more for the **fair telecoms campaign** to do - on "Clear Call Rates" alone. Please keep in touch.

