

**The Government Finally Starts to Act on Cold Calling**

The **fair telecoms campaign** is pleased to respond to [today's government news release](#).

Charities

We are disappointed that it has taken intervention by the Government to force charities to look seriously at their telephone fundraising approaches. Their own voluntary regulation, through the FRSB, is sadly too concerned about the benefits achieved by fundraising to properly balance the respective interests.

We believe that a review must go much further and **seriously consider whether the benefits of telephone fundraising offset the cost** – the inevitable fact that many calls will be made without a positive response. The cost to the fundraisers is clearly justified – especially considering the efforts made to ensure productivity by their staff!

The public cost in terms of a sense of nuisance and even harassment must be properly balanced against the public benefit achieved by the “good work” done as result of raising the money and by providing an opportunity for willing donors to give.

Other Cold Calling

We also argue that where any industry is regulated (e.g. **Claims Management, Green Deal, Financial Services, Telecoms**) the same approach must be taken by the **regulators properly balancing the relevant interests before permitting telephone marketing**. The public benefit of supporting trade and enabling potential customers to access services has to be balanced against the inevitable nuisance caused by non-productive contacts.

The four examples given represent regulated sectors which always appear amongst those areas found to be causing most nuisance by telephone marketing.

Regulatory powers already exist – there is no need for new legislation. We strongly urge the respective regulators (the government itself for the first two examples) to justify a tolerance of telephone marketing and the inevitably consequent nuisance – or prohibit its use by regulated companies themselves, and also those who act as their agents.

The Government

We believe that associating **this with the nonsensical concept of “consent” completely misses the essential point**. The “consent” nonsense is reflected in **present government policy**, the powers of the **Information Commissioner** and the views of **other noisy campaigners**. The only worthwhile marketing/fundraising telephone calls I receive are those which tell me about **something of which I was not previously aware** (that is what Marketing is for) – **how can I have given consent to that!**

Of course it is right to give the most attention to protecting the vulnerable, and expected that a campaign by the Daily Mail will prompt a response from a government.

If the government is serious about the issue of Nuisance Calls, it has to demonstrate this by properly getting to grips with the issue. Responding to a populist agenda, set by the Daily Mail and Which?, may help it to get elected, but now it must account to parliament for the way in which it is acting in the interests of all of us. It is worst for the vulnerable, but none of us should be required to tolerate this nuisance, as it undermines the enormous benefit of the telephone.

Conclusion

We believe that if the respective interests were properly balanced, then many regulators, including the government, would impose a prohibition on cold calling – using existing powers.

Whilst the nonsense of “consent” to being advised of something unknown remains in place as the general principle, we cannot expect the issue to be properly addressed in general. Regulators that have a direct responsibility for the conduct of those who market in specific sectors (including fundraising) must however stand responsible and justify their tolerance of cold calling.

