



**HMRC admits to £13m per annum 0845 ripoff**

Today, a [National Audit Office report](#) includes an admission by HMRC that its failure to switch from 0845 to 03 telephone numbers is costing callers £13 million a year.

Much of that money is a subsidy to the telecoms industry, as many callers pay a premium well in excess of the **2p per minute "Service Charge"** which HMRC, along with all other users of 0845 numbers, chooses to impose on those who contact it by telephone.

Not every call can be answered immediately, but to levy a Service Charge which is ticking up whilst callers are on hold is wholly unacceptable - it is prohibited for "Premium Rate Service" providers!

The **fair telecoms campaign** has long been calling for HMRC, as well as DWP and other public sector providers, to swiftly end this rip-off by immediately adopting the 0345 equivalents of every 0845 number, initially as an alternative. HMRC has already done this for just ONE of its numbers - the Tax Credits Helpline. There is no reason not to continue the exercise immediately.

(The necessary parallel running of old and new numbers is more readily achieved away from negotiation of a new telephone contract.)

A fuller briefing will be issued following detailed analysis of the report.



**Notes:**

See our previous engagement with this issue, for more detailed comment:

- [Parliament debates DWP using 0845 numbers - 22 Nov 2012](#)
- [The scale of the DWP telephone rip-off is revealed - 18 Oct 2012](#)
- [Elderly and vulnerable in Government phone rip-off 'scandal' - Daily Telegraph - 1 Sep 2012](#)
- [HMRC telephones - annotation on written parliamentary answer - 13 Jun 2012](#)
- [HMRC using expensive telephone numbers - BBC Money Box - 13 May 2012](#)
- [Ban on use of 084 numbers - BBC You and Yours - 19 Aug 2012](#)
- [At last - HMRC responds to the call to adopt 0345 - 21 Oct 2012](#)
- [Demand from the Treasury Select Committee - 30 July 2011](#)
- [Evidence to the Treasury Select Committee - Nov 2010](#)
- [0845 numbers, my proposals for public bodies - 11 Sep 2010](#)