



Local Authorities continue to rip-off telephone callers - and some even admit to doing so

ft On 24 November 2014, we published a list of 112 cases of English Local Authority "payment lines", using 084 telephone numbers to subsidise their costs at the expense of callers.

ft Since then many have changed their numbers, so we now only list 60, but since 1 July the situation has become clearer, and therefore far less excusable.

All users of 084 numbers are now required by regulation to declare the "Service Charge" which they choose to impose on callers by use of a "Service Number" - those beginning 084/087/09/118.

Callers to Service Numbers also incur a fixed rate "Access Charge" (up to around 45p per minute), set by their telephone company. The existence of the Access Charge, but not the individual rates, must also be declared wherever the number is promoted.

A list of the Local Authority Payment Lines still using 084 numbers follows. The number is followed by the level of the Service Charge, as pence per minute.

Names are a link to the web page giving the number. "*" marks an accurate statement of the Service Charge, "x" marks a correctly formed statement giving the wrong level of Service Charge. Other cases would seem to represent a clear breach of the Ofcom/ASA requirements.

We must deprecate those who fail to comply with regulations. It is however perhaps even worse to find some local authorities being content to be seen to be imposing a Service Charge (of up to 7p per minute), whilst being aware that callers will also incur an Access Charge - to the exclusive benefit of their telephone company - which may be more than 20 times greater.

Table listing local authorities, their 084 numbers, and service charge levels. Includes entries like Adur District / Worthing Borough Council, London Borough of Lambeth, etc.

Special mention must be reserved for Essex County Council *, which is now the only major local authority that continues to use 0845 numbers for most of its telephone access to services.

