



Premium rate Government calls win
(The Sun - 27 January 2014)

SUN POLITICS

Premium rate Govt calls win



Frank Field MP

By **STEVE HAWKES** Published: 27th January 2014

ONE of the biggest Government departments is calling time on premium-rate helpline rip-offs, in a victory for The Sun.

The 0845 lines had cost vulnerable callers up to 41p a minute to get information on public services.

But the Department for Work and Pensions will introduce cheaper 0345 numbers for “most” of its services from March. Details of the new lines — charged at a “geographical” rate the same as numbers which start 01 or 02 — will be revealed this week.

Employment minister Esther McVey told The Sun: “Our new 0345 numbers will save money for many of our callers, particularly for those using a mobile.”

It comes after Labour MP Frank Field revealed hard-up callers spent £25 million a year on DWP helplines.

And The Sun told in November how three out of five calls to ministry helplines are charged at a high rate — including crime and bereavement.

In December government departments were told to offer cheaper numbers within a year.

But the DWP said it will keep 0845 alongside 0345 numbers because they are cheaper on some BT call packages.

David Hickson of the Fair Telecoms Campaign said: “We’re delighted to have secured this victory after many years.”