





### Public bodies - telephone numbers parliamentary briefing


Following recent announcements, debates and written answers, the **fair telecoms campaign** offers the following updated briefing to parliamentarians concerned about these matters.

- ❑ **All 084 numbers** are subject to a “**Service Charge**” which is reflected in the cost of the call and offsets the cost to the person called. **Ofcom** will shortly be announcing new regulations requiring the level of the Service Charge (from 2p per minute) to be declared. <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ **All 03 numbers** are charged at the same rate as calls to geographic (01/02) numbers, by regulation which applies in all cases and has 100% compliance. Migration to 03 is supported by the 034 equivalent of every 084 number being reserved for that purpose.

#### **When is it acceptable to charge citizens for telephone access to public services!**


 **HMRC** has announced that by the end of summer 2013 all of its numbers will be changed from 084 to 03 - victory! <sup>2</sup>

 **DWP** has, so far, refused to acknowledge the existence of the Service Charge and shows no sign of a willingness to withdraw it. We hope that when the new enquiry lines to cover Universal Credit are announced this will have to mark the change! <sup>3</sup>

 **The Department of Health** introduced directions and contract revisions to prohibit use of expensive numbers by NHS providers in 2009/10. It however failed to confirm that this covers all 084 numbers. This is unquestionably true under current circumstances, and has been confirmed in parliament. <sup>4</sup>

Misrepresentation by providers and inaction by PCTs means that the misuse of 084 numbers by NHS providers continues. Ministers have repeatedly refused to intervene to defend our "national" health service. <sup>5</sup>

Some PCTs have adopted a policy of permitting a two-tier NHS service to be offered. <sup>6</sup>

 **The Department for Business** will shortly be announcing details of its implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive. This includes a provision to prohibit use of expensive numbers by businesses for calls from customers. <sup>7</sup> Does this not set a model!

## Links to reference material

1. [Ofcom to announce the end of the 084 rip-off](#)
2. [HMRC announces end of its 0845 numbers](#)
3. [Parliament debates DWP using 0845 numbers](#)
4. [Ban on expensive telephone numbers in the NHS](#)
5. [“No national health service”](#)
6. [Two-tier telephone access to NHS GPs](#)
7. [BIS proposal to ban use of ripoff telephone numbers](#)

