



Rip-off Call Connection services – as featured on “You and Yours”

We were delighted to assist in the preparation of, and contribute to, an item broadcast by BBC Radio 4 “You and Yours” on 16 April 2018 – [listen here](#). (See also [our web page on this topic](#).)

There are a number of important points to add to what was said in the broadcast:

- ft** The **Phone-paid Service Authority (PSA)** already regulates Call Connection services when they are operated on 087 and 09 numbers.
- ft** It is for **Ofcom** to extend the scope of that regulation, to cover all operation of these services.
- ft** The regulations need to be tightened, so as to totally prevent operation of services that are nothing but a rip-off, providing no useful benefit to consumers. Seeking only to limit the damage caused is worthwhile, but insufficient; we can and must go further.
- ft** **Ofcom** imposes a requirement (enforced by **the ASA**) for ALL references to 084, 087, 09 and 118 numbers to be accompanied by a proximate reference to the cost of calling – i.e. the fixed **Service Charge** (e.g. 7p per minute) and the variable **Access Charge** (up to 55p per minute). See [How does UK Calling affect businesses?](#).
- ft** **Google** is thereby in breach of this regulation by publishing open-sourced information that does not comply with this mandatory requirement.
- ft** If **Google** will not compel or ensure compliance when numbers are provided to it or found, it must add this information itself, for its publication to be legal. Alternatively, **Google** may prefer to simply avoid and prohibit presentation of these numbers in its “Knowledge Panels”.
- ft** Regardless of the presentation in “Knowledge Panels”, these rip-off numbers are often found (ready to click) in search engine results. In that context, the information cannot be subject to the qualifications required of web pages under the terms of the **Ofcom** and **PSA** regulations.
- ft** Given that calls are mostly made (especially on smart mobile phones) directly from the search engine results, much stricter regulation is required to ensure that these rip-offs are ceased.

THE PSA, OFCOM, AND GOOGLE MUST ACT NOW

Further action by citizens

Anyone spotting a 084, 087 or 09 number in a **Google** “Knowledge Panel” may do either or both of the following:

1. Report the error and its breach of regulations to **Google**, using the “*Feedback*” option (see the illustration).
2. Report the breach of regulations to the **ASA** – see <https://www.asa.org.uk/make-a-complaint.html>.

The **PSA** and **Ofcom** will shortly be consulting on changes to regulations. When this happens we will give notice on [@fairtelecoms](#) – and encourage everyone to respond!

