

**'Santa and his little helpers' misusing a 0845 number**

Many organisations continue to misuse 084 / 087 numbers, some of them in breach of regulations prohibiting their use for customer helplines, some failing to provide the call cost information that is now required. This release picks out what we see as being one of the worst current examples.

The NSPCC is operating a "**letter from Santa**" service, inviting donations in return for a letter to donors' loved ones "**from the North Pole**" - see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/.../letter-from-santa>. More wealthy donors are encouraged to enjoy an exclusive promotional offer from **Café Rouge**.

Telephone requests and enquiries are handled by "**Santa's little helpers**", on **0845 130 3203**.

"**Calls cost 3p per minute plus your phone company's access charge**" is the statement required by current regulations alongside each reference to this number. The NSPCC fails to comply with this requirement - see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/.../santa-help-information>.

The '*phone company's access charge*' is typically around 10p per minute for landline callers and around 45p per minute for mobile callers - see [The 'insanity' of using 084 or 087 numbers](#).

This means that some callers are paying a premium of 48p per minute (calls to 01/02/03 numbers normally attract no call charge) so that the NSPCC can benefit from a subsidy towards the cost of operating "**Santa's little helpers**", which would amount to little more than 2p per minute.

Our conclusions

Notwithstanding the breaches of regulation, the **fair telecoms campaign** finds it appalling that so prominent a charity would chose to indirectly give so much money to the telephone companies, at the expense of its supporters, for the sake of so tiny an illegally undeclared benefit.

We do not believe that the telephone companies have been **good children**, so as to deserve such a generous gift from Santa - paid for by those looking to support work to help **needy children**.

Notes

ft We have sought reconsideration of this decision, and comment, from NSPCC. The reply indicates as follows: "***the appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the correct procedures are in place going forward***". We take this to mean that nothing will be changed.

ft We will be happy to respond to any further comment from NSPCC. If benefit from the 3p per minute 'Service Charge' on this number is denied - then such a denial must be taken as an admission (or allegation) that the NSPCC is itself being ripped-off by its own telephone company, which receives this benefit (after VAT has been deducted) on every call.

ft There are many businesses, charities and public sector bodies that continue to use 084/087 numbers. We will be delighted to provide examples, including highlighting breaches of regulation, from any sector that may be of interest. We are very keen to stress the "insanity" of using these numbers - even when it is permitted.

ft We have reported the breach of regulations (see [CAP advice on Non-geographic call charges](#)) to the ASA.

