



## The 'trueCall approach' - a remedy for Nuisance Calls

The **fair telecoms campaign** has long demanded effective action to be taken to address the issue of "nuisance calls".

Some of this requires support from the telephone companies to assist the efforts of those who enforce the criminal law and compliance with statutory regulations. Regrettably, many telephone service providers prefer to follow their own paths, considering only their own customers. They offer ineffective and over-hyped "call blocking" features. They also protect their own interests by retaining evidence of activity that is allegedly criminal or in breach of statutory regulations.

Citizens rightly seek proper protection from the nuisance of unwanted telephone calls and the danger of falling victim to scams. We therefore support and fully endorse what is known as "**the trueCall approach**". This is seen to be highly effective, and will always be necessary, despite the extent to which the two other demands in our [Campaign to End Nuisance Calls](#) are met. This briefing covers the 3<sup>rd</sup> of those demands.

The "**trueCall approach**" was initially deployed on a device attached to a landline telephone, but is now developed and deployed as a telephone network feature.

Its difference from other solutions is that it does not rely on techniques that only block calls from particular sources. These inferior techniques can only block a fraction of unwanted calls, whilst also risking blocking valid, wanted calls, e.g. a call from a family member using an unfamiliar line.

We call on all telephone service providers (landline and mobile) to offer this facility. **Talk Talk** and **Sky Talk** have already done so for their landline customers. It is therefore fully proved in use.

We have no objection to the possibility of a modest charge being imposed for use of this most valuable service, as for other network services. One must however demand that any charge is waived for those who are vulnerable. (**Talk Talk** and **Sky Talk** offer the service at no charge.)

### How 'the trueCall approach' works

The device / system holds a list of the numbers from which all calls will be put through directly. This can be set up by entering the numbers, or by acknowledging that the number associated with the current call should be added to the list. Incoming calls from numbers on this "white list" are not affected in any way. There is also a "black list" of numbers from which all calls will be rejected.

The key feature is that all callers from "unlisted" numbers are challenged with a (customisable) voice prompt to briefly state who they are and the reason for their call. This happens before the phone rings. If there is a response to the challenge, the phone rings and the response is played, without the caller being connected.

There is then the opportunity to:

- a) Accept the call.
- b) Accept the call and add the caller's number to the "white" list.
- c) Direct the call to an answering service.
- d) Reject the call and add the caller's number to the "black" list.

Rejecting the call causes the caller to hear a (customisable) message.



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### Why the 'trueCall' approach is effective

Long experience (including research by public bodies which endorse this approach, and issue devices to vulnerable people) has shown that nearly all nuisance callers and scammers fail to respond to the prompt to identify themselves. **This means that the phone never rings.**

Because unwanted callers are never directly connected to their target, they cannot engage in persuasive conversation. Because this important element of the scammer's technique is undermined, they are known to hang up immediately when challenged.

Many basic call blocking techniques cut off genuine calls, e.g. from a new friend whose number is unknown, from a family member calling from an unfamiliar number and any genuine caller calling from a line where no number is given. This approach however does not restrict happy and proper use of the telephone. (The facility to add numbers to the "white list" on accepting a call means that wanted callers should only face the challenge once.)

### The trueCall device

As stated above, this approach was initially deployed through a device to be attached to landlines.

The **trueCall** device has additional features, other than the basic approach, commended here.

In particular, there is a "Secure" version which enables much greater control of calls to those in a "care" situation. This enables carers (perhaps sons or daughters) to remotely control which callers are able to get through.

This device is the subject of a government-funded scheme whereby local authorities issue devices on free loan to those suffering with dementia or similar conditions which partially impair their ability to use the telephone, but who rely on it as a vital means of contact.

The scheme was initiated in 2015 and has enjoyed a new raft of funding from April 2019.

More about **trueCall** can be found on the website - <https://www.truecall.co.uk/>.

### Why we support this approach

It is important to understand that the **fair telecoms campaign** cannot directly endorse any particular commercial product or service.

We cannot however disregard the fact that the approach offered by **trueCall** is unequalled as an effective means of giving telephone users effective control over the calls that they receive.

The multi-national "big data" operators play "Whac-a-mole" with competing secret lists of "bad numbers", to block. These lists are used by telephone companies and other service providers. This approach is however inevitably ineffective as it disregards the essential nature of the telephone.

Whatever the background technology, voice telephony will always be about people speaking to people, at a distance. This is something that will always be needed in telecommunications.

"**The trueCall approach**" is found to be effective in addressing the problem of nuisance calls, in just this way. This is why we support it and urge its deployment on all telephone networks.