



**Watchdog Daily on the point,  
but with serious omissions and errors**

On 26 November, **BBC Watchdog Daily** reported on the use of expensive telephone numbers for customer complaints and enquiries. [See the item at this link.](#)

It referred to the cost of calling 084 numbers, also mentioning 087 and 090, as against that of 03 and 080 numbers. It also surveyed the time spent on hold before speaking with an agent.

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The **fair telecoms campaign** regrets not having the opportunity to brief the producers of this piece directly, so as to be able to assist them on the following points:

- No reference was made to the forthcoming implementation of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Directive. One of these provisions will prohibit the very practice which was the main focus of the item. (See [this briefing](#), and [our response](#) to the recent public consultation.)
- It was stated that calls to 084 numbers from landlines cost up to 5p per minute. **This is simply untrue.** For example, **Virgin Media**, the second largest provider of landline call services charges 10.22 pence per minute, plus a call connection fee of 11.24 pence for calls to 0845 numbers.  
One example, a 1 minute 9 seconds call was said to cost **3p** from a landline. From a Virgin Media landline the cost of this call would be **32p** - more than 10 times the figure given. A further example, a 3 minute 7 second call, was said to cost up to **6p**, rather than **53p**.
- The above is but the worst of a number of cases where information was incomplete, a little misleading or outright false. The cost of calling non-geographic numbers needs the **Ofcom** simplification which will shortly be announced (again, this was not mentioned). One cannot cover all of the detail, but this is no excuse for a failure by the producers of the item to be aware of the issues and to ensure that whatever information is given is accurate.

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We were very disturbed to hear remarks attributed to the **John Lewis Partnership** being read out without comment. (We are currently seeking confirmation that these remarks truly represent the position held by this organisation.)

***"... the 0845 line is significantly cheaper than a geographical 01 or 02 number for customers using a landline, which accounts for 80% of calls"***

- 39% of residential landline calls are made using **BT**. The overwhelming majority of these callers see **no difference** in price, as there is no call charge.  
**BT** collects the Service Charge on 0845 calls from all subscribers through their Call Plan fee.
- 15% of residential landline calls are made using **Virgin Media**. Well over 90% of these calls to geographic (and 03) numbers are at no call charge.  
**Virgin Media** only collects the Service Charge on calls to 0845 numbers from those who call them. Being excluded from Calling Plans, all 0845 calls are subject to a penalty charge. Because Virgin Media is not subject to the legacy regulation remaining on BT, the penalty on 0845 calls makes them **significantly more expensive** than 01/02/03 calls in all cases.

**It is imperative that the nonsense quoted above is given no credence whatsoever.**