



We support calls to make 101 free-to-caller

This news release is in response to the front page story – [“Why must we pay to report crime?’ – Baroness Newlove queries 101 service and says anti-social behaviour out of control”](#).

It also notes a not very satisfactory written answer by **Nick Hurd MP - Minister of State for Policing**, to a question from **Steve McCabe MP**. See [101 Calls: Fees and Charges](#).

101, rather than 999 is used to report **any crime that is not currently in progress**. It is not just for low-level incidents, but anything that does not demand an urgent emergency response. In most areas it cannot be used to report anti-social behaviour that is a local authority matter.

When the 101 non-emergency Police number was launched, the **fair telecoms campaign** criticised the haphazard way in which this came about. It generally cut out an important feature of the original concept, to include anti-social behaviour – a responsibility of local authorities. We also expressed disappointment at the decision by the **Home Office** not to fund calls to this number.

We nonetheless applauded the decision to use a fixed-price per-call charge that applied to everyone. We saw that as being preferable to some callers paying nothing under the terms of an inclusive package, whereas others would be paying up to 55p per minute.

With the VAT-inclusive charge set at 15p, the Treasury earns 2.5p from each call, the telephone companies 12.5p. The latter is used to pay all parties involved in connecting the calls.

We also applauded the fact that the **Home Office** published a list of geographic-rate numbers, to enable contact with each Police Service for those unable or unwilling to dial 101. 101 is not accessible from overseas nor by those with a PAYG phone and no credit to call “special (e.g. premium rate) numbers”.

The Home Office has now removed this list of geographic rate numbers – see [Non-emergency telephone numbers](#). Each is now replaced with 101, removing the entire purpose of a list of alternative numbers, as [previously published](#)!

We have raised this particular matter with the Home Office and are awaiting a response.

We are happy to throw our support behind those calling for calls to 101 to be properly funded by the Home Office. Local council-tax payers already fund the Police resources committed to dealing with these calls. It seems a little churlish, at the least, for the national government to actually make a little money (in VAT) from these calls, rather than funding this national service.

Whilst a common per-call fixed fee (with geographic rate alternatives) is better than leaving callers at the mercy of their telephone service providers’ tariffs, the notion of having to pay to report crime is unacceptable.

It must be noted that 101 is the number used to report an incident of rape, given that the crime is not currently in progress. With a charge, it is however inaccessible to those with a PAYG phone and no credit for premium rate calls.

Please get in touch for further information and comment.

