



CabinetOffice

Clarification Statement on Telephone Number Ranges

May 2009

**Making
government
work better**

Clarification Statement on Telephone Number Ranges

This statement aims to clarify for the central government departments represented on the Contact Council the number ranges that are now available so they can determine the range that best suits the needs of their callers.

This information is designed to be of use also to local authorities and other public sector organisations, although the actions required overleaf apply at this stage only to central department Contact Council representatives. It is the intention of the Numbering Strategy Subcommittee to liaise with local authority and other public sector organisation representatives to agree an appropriate approach for these areas.

08 numbers are referred to collectively as non-geographical numbers or Number Translation Services (NTS). When the call reaches the telephone network, the number dialled by the caller is 'translated' by the network to a geographic number to deliver the call to its destination. These numbers allow suppliers of services to manage call flows and routing between contact centre sites. This can enable a better service to the end customer through facilitating efficient use of call capacity.

A key feature of NTS is that the regulatory framework makes revenue sharing possible between the Terminating Communication Provider (TCP) and the department or organisation receiving the call. For 0845 and 0870 numbers, the charge made to the caller is either retained by the TCP or shared with the department receiving the call. The latter is commonly called "revenue sharing".

Where revenue sharing, takes place the department should agree with the TCP how that payment is received. This could be either a direct payment to the department or as a discount on the overall communications charge paid to the TCP. All departments are required to know who retains this additional revenue and to ensure transparency to the public. These are both significant factors in deciding the most appropriate number range for their callers.

Charges to 08 numbers can differ significantly when calling from a fixed line or mobile phone with the latter costing considerably more. Where mobile providers offer contracts with bundled call minutes, NTS numbers are often excluded from those packages. For those on Pay as You Go tariffs, calls to these numbers usually cost more than on a contract mobile account.

03 numbers were introduced by Ofcom as an alternative number for organisations, including public sector bodies, who wish to offer their

consumers a single, trusted point of contact. 03 numbers are also non-geographic numbers that translate to geographic numbers to terminate the call. These are charged at the same rate as calls to geographic (01 /02 numbers and must be included in call packages in the same way as geographic numbers. Revenue sharing between the TCP and the called party is prohibited. These rules apply to calls from any type of line including mobile, BT, other fixed line or payphone.

Departments using 084/087 numbers that have agreed not to receive a share of the revenue generated by calls from their TCP will need to consider whether a different number range (e.g. 03 numbers) is more appropriate for their service

Government Departments should consider the cost of accessing the service to make sure that citizens on low income can afford to make contact. It is inappropriate for public bodies to use NTS numbers exclusively when dealing with people on low incomes or other vulnerable groups. The Cabinet Office Contact Council is reviewing the use of 084 and 087 numbers ranges and the plans departments have for moving to 03 numbers.

Background information: summary of number ranges and charges

The following explains telephone number prefixes used by Government departments and the charge mechanisms associated with them.

080 – Calls to numbers beginning with 080 are free to callers on fixed line networks. The cost of the call is paid by the called party. However calls to 080 numbers from mobiles are generally not free and the cost can vary widely. COI advise that by being free to callers using fixed lines, these numbers can receive higher levels of hoax calls.

0843 and 0844 – these are relatively new non-geographic numbers charged at up to 5 pence per minute on some fixed networks and marginally more on others. Calls from mobiles cost considerably more and prices may vary widely between networks. These number ranges are not usually included in call packages.

0845 - An 0845 number is a non-geographic number, in the past defined as a Business Rate Service, Lower Rate or Lo-call/Local Rate, due to their price originally being the same as a local call. **Please note** that these terms are now incorrect and should not be used. BT and some other telecoms providers now include 0845 numbers in their calling plans although other providers including mobiles do not. As a result some callers may be required to pay an additional charge.

0870 – 0870 numbers were originally branded national rate numbers or National Call rate. **Please note**, that this term is now incorrect and should not be used. BT and some other telecoms providers now include 0870 numbers in their calling plans although other providers do not and callers may be required to pay an additional charge. The cost of calling a 0870 number from a mobile can vary widely.

0871/0872/0873 - these are also relatively new non-geographic numbers charged at up to 10 pence per minute on some fixed networks and marginally more on others. Calls from mobiles cost considerably more and prices may vary widely between networks and call packages. Services using 0871/2/3 numbers are regulated by the premium rate regulator PhonepayPlus and are subject to Premium Rate regulations. These number ranges have not been included in call packages by providers.

03 – Callers pay no more for calling 03 numbers than they do for calling a geographic number (01 or 02) according to the call package they have and the line they are calling from. For all communications providers calls to 03 numbers are included in discount packages and inclusive minutes in the same way as calls to geographic numbers. This also applies to mobiles, although callers should check with their provider if they are unsure of the terms of their call package.

Sarah Fogden
Chair, Contact Council

Bernard Quinn
Chair, Numbering Subcommittee