

## **‘Raising confidence in telephone numbers’ - Confidential response 2**

Though in agreement with the general intention of the 03 number range, I am disappointed that you have not yet seen fit to include an obvious step to prevent abuse through call queuing.

It is widely believed that call queuing times are far, far too long. And in far, far too many cases, those call queuing times are being **deliberately** or **incompetently** kept long.

Sometimes this is a method of discouraging callers from obtaining a service to which they are entitled (eg to couriers for reporting loss or damage to a parcel – if they can make the cost and inconvenience of the call large enough, they may be able to pay less compensation claims).

Sometimes, this is done through a revenue sharing service to earn money.

Sometimes, it is just complete and gross incompetence caused by failure to provide adequate staffing levels at busy times of the day.

Sometimes, even though a specific number has been published for access to a particular service, the called number insists on taking the caller through a multi level menu system offering all manner of services other than the one the number was published for, before finally allowing the caller through – and probably even then, only to join yet another call queuing system.

Whichever way, the result is the same – the **caller** ends up paying for a call they usually didn’t want to make anyway, and then having to pay even **more** because of the recipient’s unhelpful implementation of unwanted call queuing and cumbersome automated attendants.

There is, however, a very easy way to make the called business pay for call queuing instead of the customer – and that is **to prohibit the implementation of call queuing and automated attendants on anything other than freephone numbers**. On all other numbers, charging must not start until a real person is available to take the call

Result is that it’s now the incompetent supplier, not the customer, that has to bear the cost of call queuing – and, at a stroke, there’s now an “accountancy evident” benefit to the supplier of minimising call queuing and automated service times.

As a short term compromise, call queuing could be allowed for not more than two minutes on an 0300 number (but definitely not on 07, 0845 or 0870 numbers) provided that if after 2 minutes the human still has not answered, the system offers to call the number back free of charge within an hour. But failing that, just insist on letting the phone ring until somebody is available – at least that way, the caller doesn’t pay for the call.