



‘Carrier pre-selection’ consumer guide

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**Office of Telecommunications
50 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JJ**

Phone: 020 7634 8700

Fax: 020 7634 8943

Website: www.oftel.gov.uk

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Improving your choice

The UK has a very competitive market in telecommunications. You may already have a choice of who supplies a phone line to your home. If you have a BT line, you can also make calls using one of the many other phone companies. You can do this by either:

- dialling a short code (or sometimes a freephone number) before you dial the number you want; or
- having an adaptor plugged in between the socket and your phone. The adaptor means you don’t have to dial a different number.

If you have a residential or business BT line you are now able to use other providers more easily. You will not have to dial any extra numbers or use an adaptor. This is called ‘Carrier Pre-Selection’ (CPS).

This leaflet explains the changes and what CPS means for you if you have a BT line. We have produced it together with consumer groups and telecommunications operators.

What if BT doesn’t provide my phone service?

Kingston Communications is currently the **only** other company that has to let its competitors provide CPS (and only to its customers in the Hull area - therefore please note that any reference to BT in this document can also apply to Kingston in the Hull area). Other companies, such as cable TV companies and mobile-phone companies, can choose whether to offer you CPS, although call types and combinations of calls may be different. If you are thinking of switching from BT, you may want to check whether your new supplier offers CPS, and in what form.

How could I benefit from CPS?

CPS means you can choose services from different phone companies using your existing BT line. As a result, you may pay less for your phone calls. Even if you have a BT and are already using services from other companies, CPS may be a more convenient way of doing this. CPS should also make the market for telecoms services more competitive, which should help to cut prices.

What types of call can I make using CPS?

There are four options for the types of call you can make using CPS (although some companies might not offer all four options). The four options are:

- international calls;
- national calls;
- international *and* national calls; and
- ‘all calls’

‘International calls’ means calls to the Republic of Ireland and overseas.

‘National’ calls means calls to UK national numbers: this does not include calls to mobile numbers, local calls or calls to specially-tariffed numbers such as national rate 0870 numbers.

The ‘all calls’ option includes:

- local calls;
- national calls;
- international calls;
- calls to mobile phones;
- specially tariffed calls (for example, freephone, local rate, national rate and premium rate);
- personal numbers; and
- paging.

You can choose to have one provider for national calls and another for international calls. You can also choose to have the same provider for both.

However, you cannot split the ‘all calls’ option. If you choose the ‘all calls’ option, you will only be able to use it with one provider. For example, you will not be able to use one provider for calls to mobile phones and another for national calls.

Certain types of call are not included within CPS, no matter which option you choose. These are calls to emergency numbers, operator assistance, directory enquiries and number ranges used for flat-rate Internet access – those starting with 0844 04 or 0808 99. However, you will still have access to these services as you do now - they will appear on your BT bill rather than your CPS provider's bill.

Do I have to make every call using my CPS provider?

No, you will be able to use any other provider with whom you have arranged services (including BT) by dialling extra digits before the phone number you want to call. (This is called an 'over-ride' or 'indirect access' code.) For example, you may want to use a CPS provider for most international calls but use another provider just for calls to a particular country.

Will I need any new phone lines or equipment?

BT will still own, run and send you bills for your phone line. Your phone number will not change. However, you will get a separate bill for call charges from each different call provider that you use.

If you have more than one phone number and line, you can choose different CPS options for each line. However, all extensions on the same line must have the same CPS option.

If I have CPS, how will the other services that I receive from my current provider change?

How existing services such as call barring, call diversion and discount schemes are affected depends on what the different companies offer. You may lose some services but gain others. For more information, check any leaflets or contracts, or talk to the companies concerned before you sign up.

You should be aware that if you want to have call barring, you will need to order it from each provider that you use. This is because providers cannot bar calls on other companies' networks. For example, if you have a BT line with call barring in place for calls to premium-rate numbers, and you use another provider with the 'all calls' option, the call barring will only work on calls to premium-rate numbers you make using BT. If you called a premium-rate number using your other provider, (as would ordinarily be the case if you had selected the 'all calls' option) the BT call barring would not work. So you would need to arrange call barring to premium-rate numbers with your other provider.

If you use BT's 'Light User Scheme', and similar lower-cost schemes such as 'In Contact' and 'In Contact-Plus', you will not be able to use these schemes and CPS. To take CPS, you will first have to cancel these schemes.

On the other hand, if you already use CPS but want to use one of these schemes instead, you will have to cancel the CPS service.

Also, if you want to change other services you receive (for example by adding new lines), you will need to find out how the CPS service will be affected.

What happens if I have a burglar or personal alarm that uses the telephone?

If you are considering using CPS on a line intended for a burglar or other type of alarm service, it is strongly recommended that you check with your chosen CPS provider that they will carry these types of calls in the event of an emergency. (You should note that CPS will make no difference to the existing 999 emergency services number.)

Do I have to make a choice?

It's up to you. If you do nothing, your current service (including any 'indirect access' services) will not change.

How will I get CPS?

To receive CPS you will need to get in touch with a CPS provider. You may need to return a written contract, alternatively you might be able to enter into a contract on the Internet or over the telephone.

The CPS options available to you for each phone number are:

- CPS for all international calls;
- CPS for all national calls;
- CPS for all international and for all national calls calls; or
- CPS for 'all calls'.

You will be able to choose the same or different companies for national and international calls. You cannot use the 'all calls' option with the other options.

What about hard selling?

Telephone and door-to-door sales people, who may be working on commission, can be very persuasive. You should think very carefully before either signing something on the spot or agreeing to take a service over the telephone.

Before CPS can be set up on your telephone line you will have a 14-day cooling off period. During this cooling-off period you should receive 2 letters; one from your existing telephone service provider and one from your new service provider. Both these letters will explain your options to you and will include contact details if you need to query the changes. If you want to cancel the CPS service you will be able to do so by contacting either your new or existing service provider.

What happens if I suddenly get a bill for telephone calls from a company I have never heard of?

First of all you should make sure that no one else in your house hold has signed up for the service.

You should also remember that you can over-ride a CPS service at any point by dialling an over-ride code. You should then follow the guidance given below on changing your provider or service.

How can I change my provider or service later?

If you then want to change your provider, contact the company of your choice. They will do this in the same way CPS was set up in the first place. This will also apply if you decide to change your service back to BT. If you are changing your provider, your current provider will be told of the change automatically.

If you want to change your call options, your CPS provider will also do this in the same way CPS was set up in the first place. If you choose an option that cannot be used with your existing service, your new request will cancel the old arrangements. This means in particular that if you have 'all calls' CPS and decide to change national or international calls to another provider, the other call types in the 'all calls' package will go back to being provided by BT.

What if I change my mind before the CPS service begins?

If you change your mind after you have entered into the contract, you will still have a 14- day ‘cooling-off’ period to change your mind. To prevent them setting up the CPS service, you can contact either BT or the CPS provider you have chosen. If you decide to choose a different provider while you are waiting for your first choice to set up CPS, you must cancel the first request within 14 days.

This cooling-off period applies to both the new CPS service and any later changes.

What does it mean when I sign the contract?

And, can I end a contract after I have signed it?

The contract is legally binding. Some contracts may be for a minimum period. Remember that a contract need not be in writing - however, in all cases you should be offered the terms and conditions in writing. The length of the contract and your rights to end it may differ from company to company. Always check the terms and conditions of the contract carefully and be sure you know what you are signing up for. If necessary, speak to the company **before** signing. Keep a record of anything you sign and a note of your rights to end the contract.

Remember, though, you will still be able to make calls through other companies (including BT) that you have agreements with. You will just need to dial extra digits before you dial the phone number.

What will it cost?

Before you agree to the CPS service, the companies must tell you how much they charge, how often they will send you bills and how you can pay. They will give you free itemised bills (unless you tell them not to). If you ask them, they should also explain what will happen if you do not pay your bills and what help they can give you if you have difficulties paying your bills.

What if the provider ends the CPS service?

If your CPS provider decides to stop the service, it should still keep to its contract with you, for example by giving you notice of when they will end the service. Your contract should tell you when the provider could end the service.

If your CPS provider goes out of business, you will still be able to make calls using an over-ride code until you choose another provider. If your provider is taken over or merges with another company, your CPS service will probably not change.

What if I change my address?

If you change your address and you want to keep CPS, you will need to contact your CPS call provider and follow the same process that you used to set up the service originally.

What if I change my address and phone number?

As with a change of address, you will need to contact your CPS call provider and follow the same process that you used to set up the service originally.

What if I only change my phone number?

If you are just changing your phone number, but not your address or CPS options, you can keep the CPS service without going through the original setting-up process again. You will need to contact your CPS provider to ask them to move the CPS service to your new number.

What if I have a problem?

If you have problems making a call, contact the company that provides that call type. They should be able to solve the problem. Before the problem is solved, you can use any other provider with whom you have an arrangement. You will just need to dial a short code before the phone number.

If you have a complaint, it is best to contact your provider. If you are not happy with the response, you can contact us (if you are in England, Scotland or Wales) or, if you are in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications (NIACT).

How can I compare companies?

When deciding whether to change providers, it makes sense to compare the different prices and services. The following are some questions you might want to think about.

- How much will different call types cost?
- Will there be discounts, or different prices for different times and days of the week?
- How will they work out call charges, for example, each second, each minute or each part-minute?
- How often will I get bills or statements?
- How can I pay?
- Will there be any connection or disconnection fees?
- What sort of contract is it and, if it is fixed-term, how long will it last?
- What arrangements and penalties are there for ending the contract?
- What if I have trouble paying my bills?
- What other phone services or benefits will I gain or lose by changing providers?
- When and how can I contact your customer services department?

If you are thinking about getting CPS, it may be helpful to check your old bills to see what call types you make most often, and so which package of prices is best for you.

For more information

We cannot recommend which company you should choose, but we can give you more information and advice on phone services in the UK and what CPS means for you. The Of tel website has a list of those operators currently offering CPS at www.of tel.gov.uk/ind_groups/op_policy/cpscgm/index.htm. (This list only refers to those operators who have said they want to be listed on the Of tel website.)

If you need any help, please contact us on 0845 714 5000 (local rate) or write to:

Consumer Representation Section
Of tel
50 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JJ.

Consumers in Northern Ireland can write to the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications at:
NIACT, Chamber of Commerce House
22 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7QA.

E-mail: advice@of tel.gov.uk

Textphone: Of tel's textphone number is 020 7634 5370.

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