

## **Q&A: New telephone number range for Greater London (020) area**

### **Q1: What has Ofcom announced?**

Ofcom announced on 8 October 2004 that an additional range of telephone numbers for Greater London will be opened up for allocation to providers by Ofcom from 1 June 2005.

### **Q2: Are there any changes to existing (020) 7 and (020) 8 numbers?**

Absolutely none! However, consumers should be reminded to write or otherwise communicate their number as '020' plus the 8-digit local number (eg, 020 8765 4321), as this assists others to omit the area code when dialling the number from other fixed lines within the Greater London area.

### **Q3: Since when has the London Code been 020? Aren't there two London codes – 0207 and 0208?**

There has only been one area code for London (020) since April 2000.

In 1997, following public consultation, Oftel announced that 020 would become the code for Greater London with effect from April 2000, following 2 years of parallel-running with 0171 and 0181 (ie, between 1998 and 2000).

With the adoption of 020, Greater London moved from having 7-digit local numbers to having 8-digit local numbers. '8' or '7' became the first digit of the local number, depending on whether the number had previously been Inner (0171) or Outer (0181) London.

### **Q3: Why a new range of Greater London numbers?**

Allocations by Ofcom of blocks of 10,000 numbers within the 020 area are running at around 40 blocks (400,000 numbers) each year. This means that Ofcom is likely to run out of free blocks of 10,000 numbers in the (020) 7 range during 2005.

As the 1998 decision (see Q2) was to reunite London, Ofcom has decided it is not appropriate to use a new range simply as a substitute for (020) 7, since this might continue to give the wrong impression that inner and outer London have separate area codes. Therefore (020) 3 numbers will be made available for allocation for use throughout the Greater London area from 1 June 2005. To reinforce this Ofcom will also suspend further allocation by it of (020) 7 and (020) 8 numbers from 1 June 2005.

### **Q4: Why (020) 3?**

Ofcom always avoids local numbers starting with '1' and '9' ranges as these can clash with diallable Access Codes (eg, 1471, 118xxx) and the emergency services (999).

Past experience indicates that if there is room for confusion with an '01' number it will happen. There are existing 01202 (Bournemouth), 01204 (Bolton), 01205 (Boston), 01206 (Colchester) codes, but no 01203 code (this was Coventry before it changed to 024 in 1998). Opening up (020) 3 is therefore the logical next step.