



Number Translation Services

An Ofcom consultation on options for the future

A summary

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1 Introduction

Ofcom is the independent regulator for the UK communications industries. From December 2003 our role has been to look after television, radio, telecommunications (telecoms) and wireless communication services.

A lot of our work involves studying the way these services are run and offered, and consulting everyone – from the companies concerned to the customers who use them – on whether our rules could be improved. This booklet is a summary of our consultation following a detailed review of Number Translation Services (NTS). We want your view on how NTS should work in future.

This booklet gives you a short summary of the review, rather than the full consultation document. (There is also a glossary in annex B to explain some of the terms we use in this summary.) However, you can see the full document on our website at www.ofcom.org.uk

What are NTS calls?

NTS calls are calls made to phone numbers that mostly begin with 08 and 09, and usually offer access to information and entertainment services, and pay-as-you-go internet access.

There is a more detailed explanation of how NTS calls work in annex A at the end of this booklet. The most important points to note are as follows.

- At present, the prices of 0845 calls made by BT customers are linked to BT's standard rates for local calls, and the prices of 0870 calls are linked to BT's standard rates for national calls, less any discounts that may apply in both cases. For other NTS number ranges, calls made by BT customers are either free (on 080 numbers) or charged at prices set by the provider of the service at the other end of the line (on 0844, 0871 or 09 numbers).
- There can be more than one phone company involved in an NTS call, since the person dialling the NTS number may be a customer of one phone company and the person or organisation answering the call may be the customer of another phone company. In this booklet, we use the phrase 'originating operator' or 'call originator' to describe the phone company on whose network an NTS call begins. We use the phrase 'terminating operator' or 'call terminator' to describe the phone company on whose network an NTS call ends.
- When a BT customer makes an NTS call, our current rules mean that BT must pass on most of the price of the call to the terminating operator. BT only keeps enough of the call price to cover its costs. In contrast, for a geographic (person-to-person) call, BT keeps most of the price of the call itself and so is able to make a reasonable profit on these geographic calls. Geographic calls are those made to 01 and 02 phone numbers that relate to a specific location in the UK (for example, 020 for London).
- Our current rules mean that the organisation receiving a call on an NTS number (the NTS service provider) can be paid by the terminating operator for receiving the call. In this booklet, we call this 'income sharing'. A very important service for UK consumers that relies on this income sharing is dial-up, pay-as-you-go internet access.

Why are we reviewing the NTS framework?

NTS has helped to develop a large number of useful services that are now available to UK customers. These include pay-as-you-go internet services, phone banking and television voting (for programmes such as Channel 4's *Big Brother*). For more examples of services, see the glossary in annex B.

However, there are two areas of concern about how NTS rules currently work. The first is mostly about the business arrangements between the operators who originate and terminate NTS calls, and the NTS service providers themselves. These arrangements, known as 'interconnect' arrangements, are especially important for internet service providers (ISPs) who rely entirely on the share they receive from call charges to pay for their services. Internet services currently make up nearly half of all the income from NTS calls.

The second area of concern relates to what customers think of NTS calls and whether they represent good value for money. This area of concern also includes difficulties customers have in finding out how much these calls cost before making them.

We have referred to these two areas as 'industry concerns' and 'customer concerns', and the following paragraphs briefly describe how we plan to deal with them.

Industry concerns

Current arrangements for regulating NTS calls have created a number of formal disputes between members of the industry about the arrangements for dividing up the income from the calls.

Below are some examples.

- From time to time, BT changes its local and national retail call prices to stay competitive with other phone companies. When BT changes these retail call prices, it must also change its prices for 0845 and 0870 calls. This is because, under our current rules, 0845 calls must be priced (before call packages and discounts) at BT's standard local retail price for BT customers. The price of 0870 calls is linked in a similar way to the price of a national call for BT customers. When BT reduces the prices of 0845 and 0870 calls, there is less money to share with the terminating operator and the NTS service provider. This is especially serious for internet service providers whose services are paid for entirely from call revenues and who are finding their profits squeezed by falling prices.

This can have only two outcomes, both of which are bad for customers. First, internet service providers (ISPs) will move their services to 0844 numbers as these are not affected by BT's price reductions. This will mean that ISPs can protect their income but will cause disruption for their customers. Second, as income from 0845 calls continues to fall, the ISPs' services will become so unprofitable that they may have to withdraw them altogether. This will mean less choice for customers who use dial-up internet services.

- Originating operators other than BT (for example, the cable phone companies) find it difficult to cover their costs in providing NTS calls to their customers. This is because these originating operators usually end up making the same payments to terminating operators as BT would have done if the call was made by a BT customer. At the same time, these originating operators want to be able to have similar retail prices for NTS calls as BT, to be competitive with BT. So, they end up making about the same amount on NTS calls made by their customers as BT does on NTS calls made by its customers. Some originating operators find it difficult to cover their costs on this basis.
- Earlier this year, BT increased the payment it expected from other originating operators for allowing their customers to call BT's NTS numbers. BT announced this change by sending originating operators a Network Charge Change Notification 500 ('NCCN500'). NCCN500 has called into question whether competition between different terminating operators is working properly. This is because it appears that only BT can make these sorts of changes, and yet none of its competitors can.

Customer concerns

Customers have told us that they are concerned about NTS calls. The main issues for them are as follows.

- NTS calls cost more than equivalent geographic calls because they do not offer the same discounts or they are not included in operators' pricing packages.
- It's hard to find out how much NTS calls actually cost until they appear on the phone bill.
- The way service providers advertise the price of calls to their services (such as 'local rate' or 'national rate') can be misleading.
- Many customers feel that operators should not be able to share their income for handling NTS calls with NTS service providers. Some customers also feel that call centres try to earn money by deliberately keeping them in queues for long periods.
- An increasing number of organisations, including government departments and important services such as GP surgeries, are switching from using geographic to NTS numbers.
- The growing use of NTS numbers (mainly 0871) for adult and similar services, which are not as easily barred as 09 premium-rate numbers. (Barring means that the network prevents any calls being made to those numbers.)

How we are tackling industry and customer concerns

After considering the concerns of the customers who use NTS services, and the people who provide them, we have developed a number of options for how NTS could be made to work in future. You'll find these options in the following section, and in more detail in the consultation document itself. We welcome your comments on any of these options, including the one that we currently prefer. Our contact details are at the end of this booklet.

2 Options for the future of NTS

During our review of NTS we held discussions with a wide range of interested groups including:

- consumer organisations;
- people who use NTS numbers;
- other regulators like us; and
- people with a direct interest in the telecoms industry.

We have carried out research into how well customers and businesses who receive calls on NTS numbers understand what it costs to make NTS calls. We have also carried out an investigation into how much it would cost the industry to make certain improvements to their systems.

You will find the result of all this work in our consultation document. In it, we have listed five options for the future regulation of NTS pricing and interconnect arrangements. This section briefly explains each option and how it would affect members of the telecoms industry and customers. But are we right? We welcome your views.

In the full consultation document, we also list the tests we plan to use to judge these five options. These tests come from our immediate aims (such as reducing disruption to customers, the costs to customers and industry of changing their phone numbers, and business uncertainty for the industry), and our medium- to long-term goals (such as promoting consumer interests and competition). We also welcome your views on whether these are the correct measures for us to use.

Option 1 – the ‘do nothing’ approach

Some people may feel that things don’t actually need changing. If so, BT’s retail price for 0845 and 0870 calls will continue to fall as BT reduces its prices for local and national calls. This will reduce the income of NTS service providers using these numbers, including internet service providers (ISPs). Eventually, ISPs won’t be able to cover their costs, and they may stop offering their services. Our research shows that 27% of UK households with internet access use pay-as-you-go internet access, mostly using 0845 numbers, so we’re particularly worried about what might happen to these services if we do nothing.

NTS service providers would be able to switch to using 0844 and 0871 numbers. That way, they could choose their call prices without the risk of future changes by BT. But they and their customers will face the disruption and costs of a number change.

This is not our preferred option, but it is a possible choice as it avoids more regulation in the market.

Option 2 – extended retail-price competition

Again, under this option, the arrangements for 0844 and 0871 stay the same. However, service providers would now be able to choose prices for 0845 and 0870 calls for BT customers, from price ranges that we would introduce. This means that the pricing arrangements for 0845 and 0870 calls would be similar to those already in place for 0844 and 0871, but with price ranges as follows.

- 0845 calls: up to and including 4p a minute (or 4p a call) for BT customers.
- 0870 calls: up to and including 8p a minute (or 8p a call) for BT customers.

These limits would apply 365 days a year. As with option 1, other operators may charge different prices.

This proposal has the advantage that service providers can choose prices, with no risk of them being changed by BT. It also avoids them having to move their services to new numbers to protect their income, and all the disruption that this would cause for them and their customers. There is a small risk that some services on NTS numbers would end.

There is a chance that the prices for some NTS calls may increase towards the maximum allowed. This may happen if customers do not know what they are being charged for 0845 and 0870 calls, and so shop around between different phone companies to get the best prices. However, 0845 and 0870 calls already cost nearly 4p a minute at off-peak times and 8p a minute at peak times for BT customers anyway. The scope for price increases would be limited to the evening and weekend periods. We're also proposing other measures to make sure customers understand the costs of calling 08 numbers. These measures are discussed in the next section.

If customers know what the call prices are, they can shop around for the best deal. This should mean that prices come down for NTS calls that compete with each other, such as dial-up internet access, horoscopes and football results services.

For these reasons, this is our preferred option, although we need to confirm this after our current public consultation. On the plus side, it avoids phone number changes, and also means that prices for many NTS calls may be reduced by competition. However, it could also make NTS call prices even less clear, since there would no longer be single prices for all 0845 and 0870 calls. We think some of the extra customer-protection measures discussed in section 3 would be particularly important if option 2 goes ahead.

Option 3 – an end to rules that support income sharing for 0845 and 0870

Sharing income with the service providers is only possible because the profits from NTS calls must be paid to the terminating operator.

If this regulation were removed from 0845 and 0870 numbers, sharing might stop in many cases and the gap between NTS and geographic calls could become much narrower.

Under this option, we would treat services that offer customers a choice differently from those that didn't. For example, customers probably have only one or two numbers to choose from if they want to call their GP, but if customers feel like dialling for their horoscope, they will have a choice of numbers.

NTS rules for 0845 and 0870 numbers would be removed altogether. Providers of services where there is choice, such as horoscopes, would be allowed to move to new numbers that we would make available, and continue to receive a share of the retail price for the call. Providers of services where there is a limited choice of numbers to dial (such as a GP's surgery) would face a number of choices:

- continue to use the same 0845 or 0870 number but without receiving any income;
- continue to use the same 0845 or 0870 number but look at other ways of charging for their services;
- try to negotiate a continued share of the income but without the immediate back-up of our formal powers to force originating operators to agree (so these negotiations may not be successful);
- move their services to 09 numbers to get a share of the income but risk losing customers; or

- close down the service.

Income sharing, which we regulate, would continue on 0844 and 0871 numbers, but these would only be available to providers of services where customers have a choice of numbers for similar services.

Option 3 may reduce the number of services using NTS numbers, or force up prices. In other cases, customers may find that they have to pay a charge on top of the price of the phone call to access particular services.

In our view, option 3 has a number of advantages, but also one basic problem. How do we draw the line easily and clearly between services where customers have enough choice and freedom to dial different numbers, and those that don't? So, this is not our preferred option.

Option 4 – an end to rules that support income sharing on any 084 or 087 number

Our research has shown that customers understand that 080 calls are generally free (except, of course, from mobile phones), but they're unsure about calls to 09 numbers. These calls are considered to be expensive and are often associated with adult content, but they are easily recognised. Our research also shows that callers are not very familiar with 084 and 087 prices, which means there is a case for removing NTS rules from 084 and 087 numbers altogether and leaving them to apply only to the more familiar 080 and 09 numbers. Under option 4, all service providers now using 084 or 087 numbers would face similar choices to those available under option 3. They could move their services to 09 numbers; that way, they could earn more money, but with the risk that consumers may not be comfortable calling these numbers. Changing numbers would also create costs and disruption for customers and providers. Some services may either close or introduce extra ways of collecting payments, on top of the cost of the phone call.

Under option 4, we believe that even fewer NTS services would continue to operate than in option 3, and those that do may be more expensive or look for extra payments. This means that customers may have a much smaller choice of services at higher prices, although all income-sharing services that we regulate would at least be kept to the 09 range. For these and other reasons, we do not recommend this option.

Option 5 – an end to rules that support income sharing on any 08 or 09 number

This option suggests scrapping the rules that say some originating operators must share call income on 08 and 09 numbers. In many cases, income sharing would possibly continue, in the form of negotiated commercial deals.

At first glance, this could be a popular option with many customers, but it could mean that many popular NTS services disappear completely (for example, pay-as-you-go internet access). Although there are other ways of charging customers for content provided over the phone (for example, credit-card payments), these tend to be more expensive and less convenient for customers and operators. So, if income sharing does continue with industry deals (rather than our NTS rules), customers could end up with higher call prices for the same services. For these reasons, we do not recommend option 5.

Another option – the industry's own proposal

This is a suggestion made by the telecoms industry itself but one we have not asked for your views on. This is because we have a number of concerns about our ability to introduce this option if it was chosen.

Under this suggestion the prices of 0845 and 0870 calls would no longer be linked to BT's standard local and national prices. Instead, there would be single new prices for BT customers for any calls to 0845 and 0870 numbers. These new prices would then be fixed – BT could not change them later – giving the industry more certainty over its future income. The arrangements for all other NTS call types would be unaffected. Operators other than BT would continue to charge what they like for NTS calls.

Although this clearer financial picture might encourage new NTS services to be introduced, this option could lead to higher prices for 0845 and 0870 calls for BT customers (and possibly for customers of other operators as well). However, because we're concerned about whether we could introduce this suggestion under our current rules, we are not asking for your views on it.

3 Customer protection

We think that big changes to the current NTS rules about how money flows between originating operators and terminating operators is not the most effective way of solving customers' NTS concerns. Such changes might solve some problems, but will also harm services that customers value, such as pay-as-you-go internet access.

To protect customers, we have identified a number of safeguards that we could apply to any of the six options referred to earlier. We welcome your comments on these safeguards, and any other ideas you may have.

Working with the ASA and CAP

We could work with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) to produce guidance on advertising 084 and 087 numbers. An example of the sort of guidance that ASA and CAP could give might be to strongly encourage all operators to include prices in their adverts where NTS calls are likely to cost more than geographic ones.

Working with the Col

We could work with the Central Office of Information (Col) on its guidance to government departments about the correct use of NTS numbers. The Col already publishes 'Better practice guidance' for government contact centres on its website at www.coi.gov.uk/ccg/

Controlling adult and other higher-risk services

We could work with the premium-rate service regulator ICSTIS (see the glossary) to control adult content and other higher-risk services on 087 numbers. At the moment, NTS service providers can, in some cases, avoid being regulated by ICSTIS simply by using numbers with retail prices of 10p a minute or less (such as 08 numbers). We believe it would be appropriate to extend ICSTIS regulation to all adult content and possibly other services of concern, whatever option we finally choose.

Better pricing information for customers from originating operators

Under our current rules, all originating operators must provide pricing information to their customers. We could strengthen this by encouraging a voluntary code of practice, focusing on NTS prices in particular.

Better pricing information for service providers from terminating operators

We believe that the terminating operators should have their own voluntary code of practice. This code should make sure that service providers are fully aware of the prices that customers are likely to pay for calling their services.

Announcing call prices in advance

An announcement could be played **before** you're connected to an NTS number, giving the price of the call. We would hope that you would not be charged for this information.

At first, this idea seems to make good sense. However, it also raises some questions: for example, although the terminating operator is responsible for providing access to the NTS service, it is the originating operator that knows how much the caller will be charged. It isn't clear, then, whether it is the originating operator or the terminating operator who should be responsible for any announcement.

Also, spoken announcements would not be suitable for calls to internet services. We are also worried that these announcements would generally push up the cost of NTS calls (even if you were not directly paying for the announcement itself). And then there's the annoyance of these announcements if you couldn't skip them for calls you make often.

Bringing all income-sharing services under ICSTIS regulation

At the moment, ICSTIS rules generally apply only to services costing more than 10p a minute. This level could be lowered, or even removed altogether, so that all NTS services would come under ICSTIS regulation. Their rules include insisting that all adverts carry clear pricing information.

4 The market review

As we have already mentioned, earlier this year BT increased the amount it charges other originating operators for allowing their customers to call BT's NTS numbers. BT's actions may mean that competition between different terminating operators is not working properly, as far as NTS calls are concerned.

When we have concerns like these, we can carry out a 'market review', which is a review of how well an economic market is working.

The full consultation document includes stage 1 of our market review of the NTS call termination market. We want your comments on our market review. We think it is possible that BT can act independently of its competitors in the NTS call termination market. This is because it appears that only BT can make these sorts of changes, but none of its competitors can. This would mean that BT has 'significant market power' (SMP) in this market (see the glossary). As a result, we think that extra rules for BT are necessary in this market. These extra rules would mean that BT could not charge other originating operators more than it charges itself for allowing customers to call NTS numbers belonging to BT.

If we decide to go ahead with option 2, we would probably need to think again about the findings of our NTS market review. However, it will take some time to put option 2 in place. We think it is important to deal with the possibility that competition is not working properly in the NTS call-termination market at the moment.

5 Our current views

We welcome your comments on the future for NTS calls. Our current views are as follows.

- We should go ahead with option 2. This would mean that BT's retail prices for 0845 and 0870 calls would no longer be linked to their retail prices for local and national calls. NTS service providers would be able to choose the retail prices for their services on the BT network. We think that this option will make sure that a good range of value-for-money services is available on NTS numbers, including pay-as-you-go internet access.
- We should combine option 2 with a package of appropriate customer-protection measures. These measures would keep customers well informed about NTS call prices and would make sure that service providers used NTS numbers responsibly.

- BT has significant market power (SMP) in the NTS call-termination market. For this reason, we think that extra rules for BT in this market are necessary.

6 Consultation questions

This section includes some of the consultation questions in the full consultation document. These are the questions that are most relevant to the issues discussed in this booklet. We have rewritten the questions here to make them easier to understand, but please feel free to read the full document (at www.ofcom.org.uk), which carries more information than we can include here. The question numbers here correspond to the numbers in annex 3 of the main document itself. The main document has other questions aimed mainly at industry operators, but again please comment on any question if you want to.

The questions that we believe particularly affect customers are as follows.

- Question 1: Do you think that the income-sharing arrangements on NTS numbers result in NTS service providers keeping people on hold simply to make money? What evidence is there of this?
- Question 2: Do you think that we have included all of the issues that concern users about NTS? Are there any other issues we should be looking at?
- Question 3: Do you agree with our policy aims, and how they've shaped the tests we will use to judge each option?
- Question 4: When we judge each option, what importance should we give to each of the tests?
- Question 6: Looking at options 3, 4 and 5, do you think we should prevent any revenue sharing on the NTS numbers mentioned?
- Question 9: We have identified five options for evaluation. What other options do you think we should consider?
- Question 12: What do you think of the safeguards we've suggested to protect customers? Which measures, or combination of measures, would you like to see introduced? Do you think that extra safeguards are even needed?
- Question 16: Do you agree with our view that BT has SMP in the NTS call-termination market?
- Question 19: Do you agree with our view about the extra rules that are appropriate for BT in the NTS call-termination market?
- Question 21: Do you agree with our preference for option 2, and should it be introduced? If not, which is your preferred option and why?
- Question 23: Do you think we need a public communications plan to explain option 2's changes and the new pricing of 0845 and 0870 calls? What roles should we, the industry and other groups have in making this plan happen?

7 How to contact us

Our actions will affect many people and organisations across the UK, so it is very important that we make our decisions at the right time and in the right way. This summary booklet aims to give you the chance to have your say.

We published the consultation on 22 October 2004 and it will close on 7 January 2005. You can see a copy of the full consultation on-line at www.ofcom.org.uk

Our website contains the full background on the issues we have briefly discussed in this booklet.

Please e-mail your comments to nts@ofcom.org.uk

You can also post or fax your comments, marked with the title of the consultation, to:

Geoff Brighton
Competition and Markets
Fourth Floor
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA.

Fax: 020 7783 4103

Please note that if you contact us by e-mail, you do not need to send us a hard copy. We do not usually acknowledge receipt of your comments.

Please tell us if you want any part of your comments to be confidential. Please also tell us if we can publish your comments when we receive them or whether you want us to wait until the consultation has closed. It will help us if you use the consultation cover sheet (included with the full consultation document and available from our website) when you send us your response.

Any general comments?

We also welcome any comments you may have on the way we have organised this consultation process. Please contact:

Philip Rutnam
Ofcom
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA.

Fax: 020 7981 3333

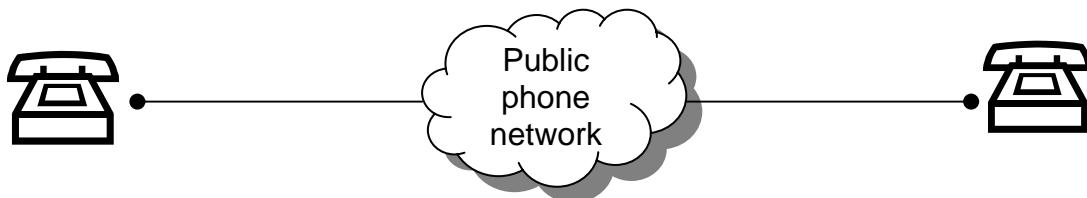
E-mail: philip.rutnam@ofcom.org.uk

Annex A – How NTS calls work

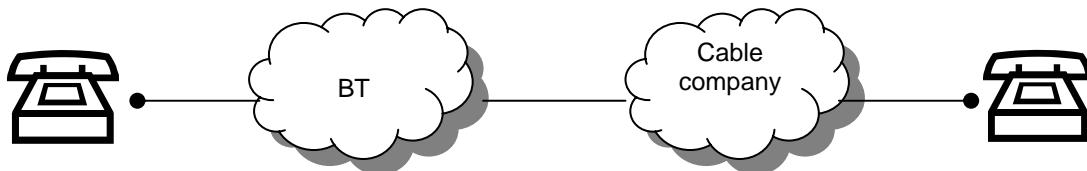
In this section we explain the difference between an ordinary phone call and an NTS call.

Ordinary phone calls

When you make a call to another person you use a traditional phone service (using either your landline phone at home or your mobile phone), and your call travels over the public network.



However, within the public network, more than one telecoms operator may carry your call. For example, if you are a BT customer and you make a call to someone who uses a cable phone company, both providers will carry the call. In this case, BT is the 'originating operator' or the 'call originator', and the cable company is the 'terminating operator' or 'call terminator'.



In this example, you'll pay BT for your call, but BT will then pay a small proportion of this to the cable company as they carried the call for part of the way. BT will then keep the rest of the call price, some of which will be its profit for providing you with the service. This person-to-person call is known as a 'geographic' call because it was made to a specific location (for example, the home phone of the person you called). Geographic phone numbers starting 01 or 02 are used for these calls.

NTS calls

NTS calls are calls made to phone numbers that mostly begin with 08 or 09, and usually offer access to information and entertainment services, and pay-as-you-go internet access.

Examples of NTS calls are:

- 0800 (or 'freephone' calls), which are free for the caller;
- 0820, which are used by schools for internet access;
- 0845, which are calls priced (before call packages and discounts) at BT's standard **local** retail price for BT customers;
- 0870, which are calls priced (before call packages and discounts) at BT's standard **national** retail price for BT customers;

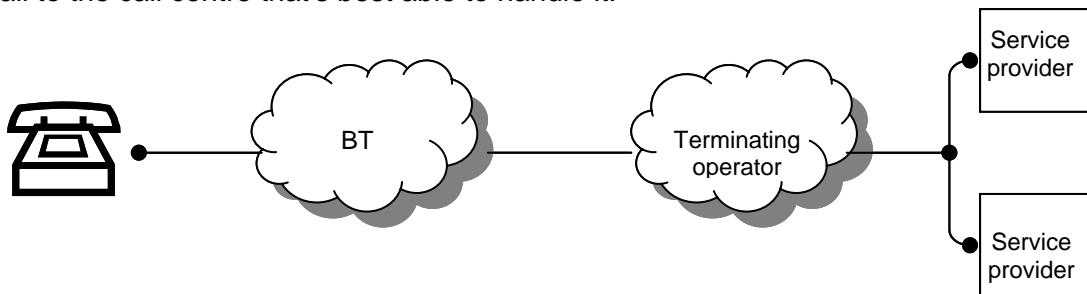
- 0844, which are calls priced at up to 5p a minute (or 5p a call) for BT customers;
- 0871, which are calls priced at up to 10p a minute (or 10p a call) for BT customers; and
- 09XX (or premium-rate calls), which are generally priced over 10p a minute (or 10p a call).

This means that there is currently only one price for calls to any number starting 0845 and one price for calls to any number starting 0870. However, there is a range of prices for calls to 0844 and 0871 numbers up to the maximum price quoted (5p and 10p a minute, or 5p and 10p a call). These prices only apply to BT customers making the calls.

Other operators, including mobile-phone operators, can charge what they like, but they must publish their prices so that their customers can find out what they are paying. All operators do this, but the prices for NTS calls are often difficult to find in operators' price lists.

Unlike geographic calls, under NTS rules, the originating operator does not keep the profit from an NTS call. So, even if you made the call from a BT line (the originating operator), BT can only keep enough to cover its costs for originating the call. The rest goes to the terminating operator – the operator who receives the call. This is how the terminating operator makes a profit on NTS calls. These services may be provided by the terminating operator themselves, or by another company – an 'NTS service provider' – who may not necessarily own a phone network.

NTS calls are non-geographic because you are not dialling a specific location. This means that calls to NTS numbers can be routed anywhere inside the UK or even abroad. For example, if you dial the customer services department of a large organisation at a busy time of day, their NTS number means that they can route your call to the call centre that's best able to handle it.



Because the operator who originates the call (BT in our example) cannot keep any of the profit, there aren't usually any discounts on the cost of NTS calls. More and more originating operators offer attractive call packages that include cheap geographic inland and international calls. When you compare them, NTS numbers are becoming relatively more expensive.

The terminating operator can use the profit from NTS calls to pay for the costs of routing the calls to the service provider. Some of this profit also pays for some, or even all, of the service itself. A good example is pay-as-you-go dial-up internet access, where there is no monthly subscription fee, and the cost of the service is covered by the phone-call charges. If NTS service providers couldn't share part of the call prices, there probably wouldn't be such a wide range of services available over the phone.

Annex B – Glossary

ASA: Advertising Standards Authority – the independent organisation that regulates non-broadcast advertisements, sales promotions and direct marketing in the UK. The ASA will also take over responsibility for broadcast advertising from 1 November 2004.

CAP: Committee of Advertising Practice – the committee that produces the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing, which is managed by the ASA.

CoI: Central Office of Information – the government department that provides advice and support to public-sector organisations on all aspects of communications.

ICSTIS (Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services) – the premium-rate service watchdog.

NTS (Number Translation Services) – phone services using the following numbers: 0800, 0844 and 0845, 0870 and 0871, 090 and 091.

Services include:

- pay-as-you-go internet access;
- international calling services;
- government and other public-sector services (for example, enquiry lines for the Department for Work and Pensions, the Inland Revenue and the DVLA);
- chat lines;
- adult entertainment services;
- voting services (such as for TV programmes like *Big Brother*);
- information services (such as train timetables and crossword solutions);
- other commercial services, including:
 - marketing and sales enquiries;
 - phone banking;
 - reporting faults and making after-sales enquiries; and
- non-commercial services such as charity lines and helplines.

NTS service provider: a provider of voice or data services to callers who dial NTS numbers.

Originating operator: the telecommunications operator on whose network a call begins.

Significant market power (SMP): when a company can act independently of its competitors in a particular market.

Terminating operator: the telecommunications operator on whose network a call ends.