



Ofcom consultation on the 0500 number range

January 2013

About Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The service aims:

- to provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

The Citizens Advice service is a network of nearly 400 independent advice centres that provide free, impartial advice from more than 3,500 locations in England and Wales, including GPs' surgeries, hospitals, community centres, county courts and magistrates courts, and mobile services both in rural areas and to serve particular dispersed groups. In 2011/12 the Citizens Advice service in England and Wales advised 2.03 million people on 6.9 million problems.

The 0500 number range

Citizens Advice welcomes the opportunity to comment on Ofcom's proposals regarding the 0500 number range as part of the wider reform of non geographic numbers.

We support Ofcom's provisional conclusion that the 0500 range should be withdrawn and agree with the assessment of the options. We do not receive much evidence of issues involving 0500 numbers, and the issues we do receive evidence about tend to concern customer service problems dealing with the companies who use them, rather than with the 0500 range itself.

We feel that options 1 and 3 are the least desirable options for a number of related reasons. Firstly, it would create confusion for consumers to have a second freephone number range which would cost to call from mobiles while 080 numbers did not. It would also complicate the communication of the changes to the 080 range to consumers at large. Secondly, we are concerned that migration to the 0500 range in response to 080 becoming free to caller would undermine the effectiveness of making 080 numbers free from mobiles.

Option 2 has some benefits in as much as it would be free to callers including those on mobile phones, but it would still complicate the message about the changes to freephone numbers. On balance, withdrawing the range – option 4 – is the most desirable from our point of view.