

Non Geographic Numbers Review Team
OFCOM
Floor 6
Competition Group
Riverside House
2A Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

10th March 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

Ofcom: Simplifying Non-Geographic Numbers Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's Simplifying Non-Geographic Numbers Consultation.

The Gas Industry Safety Group (GISG) is an independent organisation that represents all parts of the UK gas industry on safety matters and is funded by subscriptions from the major players in the industry. Our sole aim is to maintain and improve the gas safety regime in the UK. GISG's primary objectives are: -

- To promote gas safety – from beach to appliance burner head
- To encourage gas industry players to cooperate in the introduction and further development of improved practices and procedures for the safe transmission, storage and use of natural gas throughout the UK
- Ensure safety of consumers and the public, building higher awareness of gas safety in the home

GISG are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the above consultation document. We have confined our observations primarily to matters relating to options for calls to Freephone numbers from mobiles, specifically in relation to the National Gas Emergency Service number (0800 111 999).

This vital National Gas Emergency Service, run by National Grid on behalf of all gas transporters, receives calls from consumers and businesses regarding off supply situations as well as gas escapes and carbon monoxide fumes following which an engineer is immediately dispatched to investigate and ensure the situation is made safe. As a first point of call, this service is paramount in ensuring the customers' safety.

The current service was developed when fixed line services were the main source of calls and therefore free at the point of use. As stated in the Ofcom Consultation Document, mobile phones now account for the majority of calls in the UK and 26% of low income homes rely on mobile phones for calls compared with only 9% of high income groups.

GISG and its members fully support Ofcom's preliminary view that all Freephone numbers should be free to callers on mobile, as well as landlines, to ensure that the public are not dissuaded from using the services provided. In relation to the national gas emergency number this is particularly welcome, as the current charging regime could put off or hamper callers to the helpline and have very serious safety repercussions. It is also important that potential gas escapes in public outside areas can be easily reported where people may only have access to a mobile phone.

We hope that you find these comments useful.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Bielby', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Bielby
Chairman - GISG