

Reference: 01450003

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18 May 2022

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information regarding Openreach causing charges. Your request was received on 28 April 2022 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

Openreach engineers regularly call 123 (the speaking clock) on customers' lines as a test call. This results in a charge to the subscriber who owns that line. Whilst each amount is small (35p), it results in significant unearned income for the phone companies, and, presumably, the speaking clock. (Who gets the speaking clock income?) Few customers will even notice the charge, much less spend the time to get credit for it.

1) What is the total 123 annual income; and how is it divided between the phone companies, Openreach and the speaking clock?

2) What is the total annual income gained by the phone companies, Openreach and the speaking clock (and so stolen from phone customers) from test calls to 123? (I will accept an estimate, as it is presumably impossible to fully disentangle genuine 123 calls from these tests. I suspect that the vast majority of 123 calls are now in fact Openreach tests rather than genuine calls. Who needs to call 123 these days? Hence question 1.)

3) What is Ofcom doing to quantify and stop this practice, which is clearly wrong? Perhaps it is time to withdraw the speaking clock, or make it free, and just turn 123 into a convenient, free, test number.

4) Is the speaking clock accurate enough over VOIP anyway to be a useful service?

Our response

In response to questions 1, 2 and 4, we do not hold this information. You would need to contact Openreach directly for information.

In response to question 3, Ofcom has not received significant complaints about this over the years. However, we can bring this practice to the attention of Openreach but suggest complaining to Openreach directly. You may wish to use their virtual assistant ("Eiva")

<https://www.openreach.com/help-and-support/when-to-get-in-touch-with-openreach>, which has a button for 'Our Engineers' and 'Contacting us' (via 'Others').

We do not currently have plans to look at the 123 service itself and note there are alternative speaking clock services available.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Zach Westbrook

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF