

Reference: 01731727

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

20 December 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning access charge complaints. Your request was received on 6 December 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “FOI Act”).

Your request

“NGCS access charge costs to consumer

Since the implementation of the Access charge on Non Geo Number ranges in July 2016

Has ofcom produced any statistics or figures real or estimated as to the number of complaints relating to bill shock as a result of the Access Charges imposed by the networks

Figures either broken down by Year or Network or both”

Our response

We published an analysis of complaints about bill shock and research about consumer awareness of the pricing of 084 and 087 numbers in our [evaluation of the 2015 pricing reforms](#),¹ which was published on 1 June 2021:

- Paragraphs A5.6 to A5.27 refer to our research findings about consumer awareness of call prices and the Access Charge;
- Paragraphs A5.28 to A5.45 include analysis of complaints about bill shock and there are detailed figures for bill shock complaints about 084 numbers in [Figure A5.1](#)² on page 43 (although this did not separate the Access Charge element); and
- We refer to the conclusions we have drawn from this analysis in paragraphs 4.8 and 5.1.

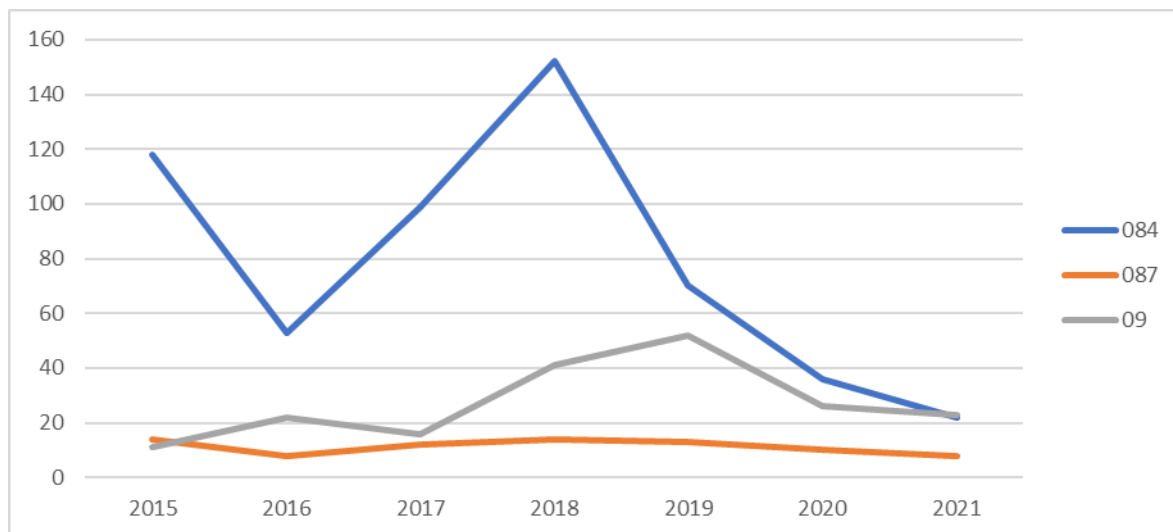
We prepared a chart (Figure 1, below) for our internal use which summarised numbers of complaints we received over the period from 1 January 2015 to 7 October 2021. Complaints were categorised as relating to charges for calls to numbers in the 084, 087 and 09 ranges respectively, although these

¹ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/219948/Evaluation-of-the-2015-pricing-reforms-for-calls-to-non-geographic-numbers.pdf

² https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/219948/Evaluation-of-the-2015-pricing-reforms-for-calls-to-non-geographic-numbers.pdf#page=45

figures were intended only to give an indication as to the numbers of complaints. They do not separate out any complaints which referred specifically to the Access Charge element of the call price, nor do they confirm that there were indeed any such complaints. As these figures have not been published, they have not been reviewed for publication.

Figure 1: Count of complaints regarding call charges to 084, 087 and 09 numbers between 1 January 2015 and 7 October 2021



In addition, between 1 October 2021 and 1 December 2023, our Consumer Contact Team have logged 66 cases about the cost of calls to 084, 087, and 09 numbers. This figure covers all complaints of this description and therefore does not represent the number of complaints that related specifically to the Access Charge element of the call price, nor does it confirm that there were any such complaints.

We also gathered information from communications providers in 2020 using our statutory powers under the Communications Act 2003 (the "CA 2003"), including the number of complaints received by the providers in Q1/Q2 2020 relating to charges for calls, or the advertising of charges, to numbers in the 084 and 087 range.

However, we are unable to disclose this information. Section 44 of the FOI Act exempts the disclosure of information which is prohibited by another enactment. In this case, we are prohibited under section 393 of the CA 2003 from disclosing information that relates to a business which we have obtained in exercising our information gathering powers, unless we have the consent of that business or one of the statutory gateways for disclosure under section 393(2) is met. Neither of these exceptions apply here. Section 44 of the FOI Act is an absolute exemption from disclosure and does not require a public interest test.

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

Information Requests

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