

4th July 2018

I am responding to this consultation regarding pricing of Directory Enquiry services.

I have great concern regarding the cost of 118 services. There is no easy way of finding the cost information of calling specific 118 directory services with the exception of BT payphones 118141 service and Virgin Media's.

It can cost £8 per minute from a mobile to call 118118.

The idea of 118 numbers has harmed consumers since the introduction in 2003 and I recommend that Ofcom re-introduces the 192 system with price caps. If this is not possible, then Ofcom should require 118 providers to play a free recorded message of the cost of calling such number and introduce a price cap.

Many 118 services provide an onward call connect service which connects you automatically to the number required, if a consumer agrees to the onward connection via 118118 then this call could cost £8.98 per minute with a 10 minute call costing almost £90. This is a serious problem and price caps need to be in place.

It is possible for Ofcom to re-introduce the 192 system after Brexit as the 118 system was introduced by the EU.

In 2002 a call to 192 on BT costed just 60p per minute, the service was free from BT payphones until 1999.

The high costs of calling 118 numbers are so high that non-BT payphone operators such as NWP Street and Infocus Public Networks have completely barred calls to 118 numbers because its not possible to set a minimum call charge for such numbers and they will simply lose money. Who would actually insert £10 into a payphone to call a 118 number?

The type of callers that are likely to use 118 numbers are mostly vulnerable people in society such as elderly people, people in an emergency situation and low income households that have no access to the internet. This is a perfect example of the harm that is being caused to consumers.

Mr Mehran Roshandel