

<b>Consultation title</b>	<b>Directory Enquiries (118) Review</b>
<b>Representing (delete as appropriate)</b>	Organisation
<b>Organisation name</b>	Sparta Telecom

## Your response

<b>Question</b>	<b>Your response</b>
<b>Question 1: Do you agree with our assessment of harm?</b>	Yes
<b>Question 2: Do you agree with our view that the proposed cap on the service charge for a call to a 118 number of £2.58 (ex VAT) per 90 seconds of the call is an effective and proportionate to remedy the harms identified?</b>	No see 4 below
<b>Question 3: Do you agree with our view that an overall implementation period of four months following Statement will be a sufficient time for providers to introduce the proposed cap?</b>	Yes

**Question 4: Do you have any comments on the notifications at Annex 10 and the draft modification set out within them? Where you disagree with the proposed modification, please explain why.**

We don't think the Caps are enough. Time and again agents of the providers are failing to inform customers of the cost per min they will be charged for each minute when they say, "shall I put you through".

Because they are not informing people of the cost properly. We have had dozens of customers that have received bill shock because bills for directory enquiry numbers have been between £40 and £95 per call, purely because they have allowed the operator to put them through without being informed of the impact of putting them through if they spend a long time on the call.

In many cases because they are elderly and vulnerable people, especially those who are hard of hearing, it's not fully explained that depending on how long they talk for they could have a large bill.

Agents should have a duty of care when dealing with elderly or vulnerable customers, they are failing in this, and this subject should be part of the consultation as this is serious concern for those on pensions and ourselves having to issue the bills.

In one case this caused a medical emergency because of shock. A normal simple bill of £22 suddenly rose to over £80 because of directory enquiry calls. For someone on a pension that is a huge chunk on what they thought would be a cheapish call.

We find that an article in 2017 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/money/3504572/outrage-as-directory-enquiry-calls-rocket-2200-per-cent-to-almost-9-after-series-of-price-hikes/> actually confirms our own experience and reality. In fact the introduction of 118 numbers to bring costs down has in fact gone the other way and driven costs up. Regardless of a customer as a provider we fail to see how a 40p call in 2003 can be justified with a call now costing in excess of £2 per min.

We would therefore ask that this subject is either part of this consultation or a separate consultation. We are just one provider, but we are sure that other providers will have



experienced the same billing to customers experience.