

Reference: 01558692

Zach Westbrook
Information Rights Advisor
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

21 February 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the Special Freephone Tariff. Your request was received on 24 January 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request & our response

1. all information relating to Ofcom's involvement in the establishment of the 'Special Freephone Tariff' (now known as the Helpline Freephone Range);

The establishment of the 'Special Freephone Tariff' by the Telephone Helplines Association (now known as Helplines Partnership) predates Ofcom as the UK's communications regulator. As such, we do not hold this information. Oftel (one of Ofcom's predecessor regulators) supported the original establishment of the scheme back in 1999 by setting aside a distinct number range (080880) so that telecoms providers could distinguish the numbers using that tariff.

2. all information relating to Ofcom's permission, approval or sanctioning of the 0.1 pence per minute levy within the tariff to be payable to The Helplines Association, and confirmation that this approval extends to The Helplines Partnership (HLP);

3. all information relating to the purpose or intention of that levy;

Ofcom was not involved with approving or sanctioning this levy so we do not hold this information.

4. confirmation of any authorisation from Ofcom for HLP to operate the Special Freephone Tariff, or that HLP operates this on Ofcom's behalf;

As set out in response to question 1, the Special Freephone Tariff was set up by HLP's predecessor the Telephone Helplines Association. It does not operate this on behalf of Ofcom. Ofcom's predecessor regulator Oftel supported the original establishment of the Special Freephone Tariff by setting aside a specific number range for its use. Ofcom has no other involvement in the Special Freephone Tariff.

5. confirmation that HLP informed Ofcom of the imposition of 'administration fees' and an 'application fee' on its members in order for them to access the Special Freephone Tariff and, by extension, Ofcom's approval of these fees;

As above, Ofcom does not have a role in approving these fees and therefore we do not hold this information.

6. confirmation, or denial, that The Helplines Partnership is regulated by Ofcom.

Ofcom regulates the provision of telecommunication services by imposing [General Conditions of entitlement](#) – these conditions apply to providers of electronic communications networks, electronic communications services or persons providing such a network or service of a particular description specified in the general condition/s. We have not allocated numbers to the Helplines Partnership (the numbers are allocated directly to the communication providers). As far as we are aware, it is not operating an electronic communications network or service and therefore it would not be regulated by Ofcom.

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