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## **OFCOM PROPOSALS FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY COULD GIVE CONSUMERS THE PROTECTION THEY NEED**

Commenting on Ofcom proposals to change how telephone numbers are charged, which would increase transparency and make it easier for consumers to see how much calls cost, **Ernest Doku, telecoms expert at uSwitch.com, says:** “News that Ofcom is tackling one of the most notoriously murky parts of the telecoms market is very welcome. Many consumers, either perplexed by or unaware of the costs involved, have taken a punt on calling high rate or non-geographical numbers hoping they won't be hung out to dry when their bills come in.

“The introduction of an access charge could also hopefully see consumers protected against increasing costs for at least part of the cost of calling, as this would remain fixed if Ofcom pushes ahead with its favoured proposal relating to price rises in fixed term contracts.

“However, this still doesn't get to the heart of the issue. Being more transparent about the high cost of making a call is one thing – tackling these often extortionate costs is another. And capping the 'access charge' would only be half the job – service providers would still be free to continue to increase prices of these calls at an alarming rate.

“Reports suggest certain premium rate numbers have gone up by more than 400% over the last two years - it is these costs that are really doing the damage to peoples' pockets. We can only hope that the consultation Ofcom has hinted at will lead to proper protection for consumers in this tricky part of the market.

“As for making 'free' numbers free from all phones, this would be a long-overdue victory for common-sense, and Ofcom is clearly intent on reducing the cost of these calls from mobiles. However, it's vital that Ofcom acts to deliver on this, and does so sooner rather than later.”

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