

Premium Rate

The mid 1980's saw the introduction of domestic Premium Rate Services in the UK telecommunications market. Premium Rate Services (PRS) are charged at a higher rate than standard calls and appear on a customer's telephone bill, just as any other call would.

These numbers provide the caller with either a service or information such as a weather information line, or betting tips. Other examples of PRS include entertainment services (i.e. chat lines), competition hotlines and over-the-phone advice lines.

In 1997, Oftel set out a new numbering scheme as a result of rapid growth in demand for numbers, thereby presenting an opportunity to make it easier to identify different types of service and their tariffs.

This change saw all PRS numbers adopting the 090 prefix and those with sexual content using 0909. The new numbering system allowed customers to easily bar access to these services should they choose to do so.

As the customer is responsible for the payment of the bill, it is understandable that there should be certain safeguards to protect them. Since 1986, the Premium Rate industry has been self regulated through ICSTIS (the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services) as a non-statutory body, financed by the telephone companies.

It is they who set and maintain the standards for the content & promotion of PRS, whilst investigating any complaints they may receive in relation to both. As a guideline, ICSTIS publishes information relating to their work and recommend measures to achieve compliance with the Code.

For more information see the ICSTIS website: <http://www.icstis.org.uk>