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**Information Management**

Miss Ailsa Beaton

12<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

**Communications Portfolio**

DCC Ian Readhead

**For the Attention of all ACPO Members with Responsibility for Force Contact Management**

Dear Colleagues

**Police Non Emergency '0845' Contact Numbers**

As holder of the ACPO Portfolios for both Communications and Data Protection/Freedom of Information I have become aware of increasing public concerns over the use by the service of '0845' prefixed telephone numbers for non emergency police contact.

The business driven move away from localised police control and contact management towards more centralised functions covering much wider geographical areas has been accompanied by tendency to utilise non geographic telephone numbers in the '0845' number range to access these contact centres.

At the time of inception many '0845' numbers were charged at 'local rate' and forces promoted the number accordingly. However developments and competition within the telecommunications industry has seen an erosion of the link between the 'local rate' and '0845' tariffs such that in the current market it may be inaccurate to promote such numbers as 'local rate'. In fact '0845' numbers often work out more expensive for a caller to use than would be the case were a traditional '01' or '02' geographical number used, especially when being dialled from any of the mobile networks.

Requests have been made to numerous forces under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, for publication of underlying or alternative geographic numbers, and details of the revenue sharing arrangements associated with forces' '0845' numbers.

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Refusal to disclose the number has been justified under the exemption provided by Section 38 of the Act. The Information Commissioner upheld this argument in the case of NHS Direct, but it is considered unlikely that the same submission would be successful in respect of most police contact centres.

Ofcom, the Communications Regulatory Authority, is aware of issues surrounding '0845' and '0870' and as result a new range of '03' numbers is being created to increase certainty, trust and confidence in the numbers that consumers use to call public services. The tariffs in respect of the '03' numbers will be as for geographic numbers with no revenue sharing arrangements being permitted.

Forces currently using '0845' numbers may wish to migrate to the '03' numbers which can be achieved by simply replacing the '8' with a '3' so that the prefix becomes '0345' and the original number remains the same. This process is not automatic and forces wishing make this transition should discuss matters with their respective telephony service providers.

Retaining the '0845' number is an option that remains open to forces, and this may be appealing against the backdrop of the potential costs (such as the reprinting of stationery, changes to numbers advertised on vehicles, and so on) of migrating to an alternative. However I would suggest that any force intending to continue utilising an '0845' number either in the short, medium or long term should:

- a) Remove any reference to the '0845' number being charged at 'local rate', and,
- b) Give consideration to the additional publication of an alternative geographic '01' or '02' number.

Please address responses to the Secretary of the Communications Portfolio, Lee Warhurst ([lee.warhurst@hampshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:lee.warhurst@hampshire.pnn.police.uk)).

Yours sincerely

**I R Readhead QPM LLB**

**Deputy Chief Constable  
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