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PSA updates requirements for all ICSS – regardless of number range



9 October 2019

The Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA) is introducing new Special conditions for Information Connection and Signposting Services (ICSS), covering all ICSS regardless of the number range they are operated on.

These updated Special conditions follow changes in January 2019 to extend the scope of Ofcom's Premium Rate Service Condition to include all ICSS within the definition of controlled premium rate services. This extended PSA regulation to all ICSS irrespective of the number range they are operating on.

The Special conditions will improve the information about these services that is given to consumers, both in search results and on service websites, to make it clearer that they are third parties and that calls via an ICSS may be more expensive than calling the desired number directly.

This follows extensive consultation with stakeholders, which led to some of the proposed Special conditions being amended.

The updated Special conditions include requirements that:

- Services must not promote using URLs which mislead the consumer into believing the ICSS website is associated with the organisation they are seeking.
- All promotional material must be distinct in appearance from that of the organisation being sought by the consumer.
- Consumers must clearly be informed of extra costs for onward connection and have the option to refuse onward connection if it incurs extra costs.
- Marketing for the service, including search engine results, include an accurate description of the true nature of the service.
- Prominent pricing information, an accurate description of the true nature of the service and the name of the third-party organization operating the service, should be made clear on webpages close to the call to action.

The Special conditions are intended to protect consumers from inadvertently using an ICSS believing that they are calling the end organisation they are seeking. There have been concerns from consumers, organisations, including government departments and agencies, that are targeted by ICSS, and the regulator about financial detriment as a result of misleading digital marketing practices leading people to call via a premium rate number unknowingly. The updated Special conditions will come in to force for all ICSS on 20 December 2019.

[Review the statement, responses and Special conditions here.](#)

Re-consultation on updated proposals for Special Condition ICSS11

The PSA has decided to re-consult on a variation to the original proposal for ICSS11 for providers who operate with per call tariffs as a result of evidence submitted in the previous consultation.

The proposal is that providers of per call tariff ICSS can either state the service charge within the alert upon connection, or send the consumer a free to receive SMS following completion of the ICSS, which would provide both a receipt for the call and also the actual number of the organisation being sought.

The re-consultation, including how to respond, can be found at Annex B of the statement.

The closing date for the consultation is 26 November 2019.

[Read the proposals here.](#)



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