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years of regulating
premium rate services



The Independent Committee for the Supervision of
Standards of Telephone Information Services

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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

0871 pricing requirements and advertising changes will affect thousands of UK companies

The phone regulator ICSTIS has today launched a pre-consultation which sets out clearly the need for enhanced consumer understanding about the cost of calling 0871 numbers. This will mean that many companies who use 0871 numbers will need to change their advertising and marketing material in order to comply with new regulation.

Following the decision by Ofcom in April 2006 for ICSTIS to regulate 0871 numbers from early 2008, ICSTIS is today launching a pre-consultation outlining the issues that will need to be addressed to ensure that consumers continue to have trust and confidence in using 0871 numbers.

ICSTIS' pre-consultation emphasises the importance of ensuring consumer understand that 0871 numbers can cost up to 10p per minute and may cost more from some mobile phones and other networks. Paul Whiteing, Deputy Director of ICSTIS said: "Consumer trust in 0871 numbers is crucial. If you are calling a company and they may be charging you up to 10p a minute then you need to know this before you call. Many thousands of companies who are using 0871 numbers will need to amend their advertising and marketing material to ensure call costs are prominently displayed and consumers are clear about the price. We appreciate this is a considerable undertaking for some companies and that introducing these changes may take time. Our aim is to create policy that put the consumer at the heart of the regulatory requirements - to do this we will be insisting on absolute clarity and transparency when it comes to telling consumers what calls cost. This will be backed by tough enforcement powers."

The pre-consultation document has been launched by ICSTIS today. The closing date for comments is Friday 29th September 2006. ICSTIS encourages all companies and consumer bodies with an interest to respond with their views.

– ends –

For further information, please contact the ICSTIS Press Office:

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NOTES:

- 0871 numbers are special numbers on which telephone companies and third party service providers can share the revenue costs of the call (up to 10p per minute).
- Ofcom announced (NTS: A Way Forward – 19 April 2006) that as from early 2008, ICSTIS would take over the regulation of 0871 numbers.
- 0871 numbers are used for a variety of purposes including operating call centres, helplines and booking services.
- ICSTIS is the regulator of premium rate services. Ofcom is extending its powers to regulate 0871 numbers with effect from early 2008. ICSTIS has wide ranging powers for managing breaches of its Code of Practice. This includes fine powers of up to £250,000.