

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW RULES FOR TV QUIZ CHANNELS ANNOUNCED

ICSTIS, the premium rate services regulator, today launched its consultation on the introduction of new rules and a prior permission regime for premium rate TV quiz channels and for TV programmes whose dedicated purpose is to run premium rate competitions. Its move follows a significant increase in the number of quiz TV channels, together with an increase in the number of complaints it has received.

ICSTIS is proposing to put these new rules in place given that competitions on TV quiz channels are a new and rapidly growing area of premium rate service. The move aims to ensure that consumers are protected – and are confident in using – this increasingly popular interactive medium.

The new rules mean that those wanting to run premium rate competitions on TV quiz channels will need to come to ICSTIS before running a service and get the regulator's permission – 'prior permission'. The requirements of the permission regime stress the need for:

- Clear pricing
- An adequate explanation of how the service will operate and clear terms and conditions
- A cost warning after spending £20
- Substantiation of certain aspects of the operation of the service – especially the need for there to be a single correct answer which must be available to ICSTIS to inspect should complaints arise

ICSTIS Director, George Kidd, said: "ICSTIS' aim is that effective consumer safeguards are in place so that consumers can continue to enjoy new quiz TV programmes and channels with the clear understanding about the costs associated with participating".

The consultation document is available on ICSTIS' website – www.icstis.org.uk – under 'latest news'.

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For further information, contact the ICSTIS Press Office:

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NOTES

- ICSTIS is the industry-funded regulatory body for all premium rate charged communications.
- We regulate the content, promotion and overall operation of services through our Code of Practice. We investigate complaints, and have the power to fine companies and bar access to services if the Code is breached. We can also bar the individual(s) behind a company from running any other premium rate services under any company name on any telephone network for a defined period.
- Services are advertised on either 09 dialling codes or, in the case of mobile services, on four or five digit short codes followed by a descriptive key word (for example, 82828 VOTE). In some instances, such as interactive TV where viewers make 'calls' using their remote controls, the premium rate number may not be shown. In addition, we regulate all '118' directory enquiry services.
- Services offer information and entertainment via phone, fax, PC (e-mail, Internet, bulletin board), mobile (SMS/MMS/WAP) or interactive digital TV, and currently vary in cost from 10 pence per call to £1.50 per minute. The money paid by users for services is shared between the telephone company carrying the service and the organisation providing the content. Approximately 45,000 services are in operation at any one time, generating estimated revenue of over £1 billion in 2004
- There are currently at least 12 TV stations solely operating premium rate TV quiz services and there are many more channels that have programmes whose dedicated purpose is premium rate TV quiz and where participants interact using premium rate 09 numbers or premium rate SMS.