

Reference: 01857677

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

14 August 2024

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning the UK's telephone numbering plan.

We received this request on 24 July 2024 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

According to the Wikipedia article Telephone numbers in the United Kingdom (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone_numbers_in_the_United_Kingdom), the majority of geographic telephone numbers in the UK have 10-digit National Significant Numbers (NSN).

However, there are a number of 9-digit NSN areas:

** 4+5, used in 40 areas which have a mix of 5- and 6-digit local numbers, such as Bolton and Camberley*

** 5+4, used in one area*

In addition, there are 12 "mixed" areas which use the 5+5 format, such as 015242 (Hornby), which shares its first 4 NSN digits with Lancaster (01524).

In relation to each of these 53 area codes, what plans does Ofcom have to move these to 10-digit NSN in the more common 4+6 format, and when might this happen? For convenience, multiple area codes can be grouped in the response where the plan is the same or broadly similar.

Our response

Ofcom has no plans to make changes to geographic numbers to introduce a consistent '0' plus 10 dialled digits (i.e. 10-digit NSN) format across all area codes in the UK's numbering scheme. To achieve this, we would have to require that telecoms providers make number changes to existing telephone numbers in all the area codes with 9-digit NSNs and area codes with mixed digit lengths. This would lead to inconvenience, costs and disruption for consumers and businesses using numbers in the relevant area codes.

We acknowledge that moving all area codes to a 10-digit NSN format would increase the supply of numbers in the area codes and achieve a consistent digit length across all UK geographic numbers. However, we consider that it would be in the consumer's interest to avoid the costs and inconvenience of number changes where possible. This strategic position was most recently considered in our ['Future of telephone numbers' review](#).

Ofcom publishes the [National Numbering Scheme](#) on our website. As part of the data provided, we set out the digit format for all area codes, so the NSN length is clear.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).