

General public should not have to pay for 101 non-emergency calls from tomorrow

From tomorrow no member of the public should have to pay for 101 non-emergency calls to the police.

Currently callers to the 101 number are connected to their local police force, or a force of their choice, and charged 15p a time.

The vast majority of people will be able to use the service free of charge from tomorrow. However, from 1 April to 1 July there remains a chance that users of small operators will be charged for using the 101 service. The Home Office will be urging those providers to refund their customers.

In May last year the Home Office announced it will invest £7 million a year to make the service free, which receives around 30 million calls annually.

The Home Office have also worked with the police to ensure that everyone in England and Wales can report crime online free of charge.

There are 20 forces currently using the Single Online Home. This is a web platform that hosts the website of each force, enabling them to provide a free non-emergency crime reporting service online. The Single Online Home currently reaches more than half of the population of England and Wales.

Forces that are not currently on this platform also provide online forms or alternative online channels for reporting non-urgent crime, which are processed in the same way as a call.

The Home Office also continues to provide funding to forces for a new Police.uk website, which once launched, will provide a single point of access to police information and services, including online reporting.

The 101 service was launched nationally in December 2011, providing an accessible number for non-emergency contact with the police.

The service should be used when an emergency response is not required. For example:

- if your car has been stolen
- if your property has been damaged
- if you suspect drug use or dealing in your neighbourhood
- to give the police information about crime in your area
- to speak to the police about a general enquiry

Members of the public should continue to call the free 999 service for emergencies.