

Caroline Mockford

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Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
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Edinburgh  
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25<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Dear Petitions Committee,

Please find below my responses to the latest submissions to my petition (PE1285).

Response to submissions E, F and G

- It is very encouraging to see that on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, the DWP made the decision to allow calls made to Benefit Help lines to be made free of charge from mobile phones [<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2010/january-2010/dwp007-150110.shtml>]. The DWP have clearly shown an understanding of the difficulties that people on low incomes face and have acted accordingly. In line with this it could be argued that the NHS 24 service is as an important service (if not more) as the benefit help lines. Therefore this would strengthen the argument for the same to be applied to people making calls to this service.
- It is very positive that T-Mobile would be willing to negotiate with the Scottish Government or NHS 24, if the decision was taken to make NHS 24 a free phone number from mobile phones. On the understanding that NHS 24 as the recipient would pay for the calls.
- T Mobile states that the only condition placed on 0845 numbers is that these numbers must be charged at BT standard local retail price for BT land line customers.- could this not also be applied to mobile phones as well?

- The response from Ofcom is most encouraging and I am very happy that they will be going ahead with the pilots in England in 2010. Would it be possible to find out when exactly this will take place and for how long the pilots will run for? When would it be likely that a decision is taken? At the end of 2010? In 2011? What happens if the outcome of the pilots are that the cost to make this service free are too high?

I look forward to hearing the discussion of the committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> February.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Mockford