Good Telephony Guide

Mark McLean
Telephone Helplines Association

ict hub

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Finally, I am indebted to Andrea Butcher, Chris Dunlop, Kathy Mulville, Deirdre Rusling, Priya Shah and Rehka Wadhwani, all of whom played an important part in developing this idea and contributing to the content that follows.

About the Telephone Helplines Association (THA)

Established in 1996, the THA is a membership organisation of over 500 providers of telephone information and advice in the UK and Ireland. Around two thirds of its members are small to medium-sized VCOs and these frequently require support with telephony issues. The THA provides specialist training and consultancy to telephone helplines with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of the services and the confidence that the public has in using them.

The THA operates member benefit schemes which include competitive-rate freephone services.

The THA is represented on the ICT Hub Advisory Group and carried out a survey of telephony awareness, expertise and support needs across the sector in 2006.

The THA has been an NCVO-approved consultant since 2006.

http://www.helplines.org.uk

About the author

Mark McLean is a senior consultant and trainer for the THA. He has 17 years of experience in the field of delivering and managing telephone-based services and working with the associated technologies. He has written the specification for, commissioned and established a call centre for national government helpline services, assisted groups of voluntary sector organisations to move onto a common telephony platform and worked with the mobile networks to improve the availability of free calls to freephone numbers. He is the THA's lead contact with Ofcom and with telephony suppliers. He has recently authored the THA's new guidelines for services operating in a multi-channel environment.

Mark has an Advanced Certificate in Team Leadership for Call Centre Managers from the Nottingham Business School and chairs a community development charity in the North West.

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Foreword

The ICT Hub commissioned research on telephony in 2006 which highlighted key points around the role of telephony and ICT and its impact particularly on small and medium VCOs. In the light of this research, the ICT Hub commissioned the Telephone Helplines Association in 2007 to improve the telephony environment for small and medium VCOs across England. This work has helped improve the strategic (as well as the technical) application of telephony, ensuring groups are clear about needs and enabling access to guidance on what options are available.

Through a series of workshops held over the past 12 months, this guide has been developed based upon findings from groups that attended these sessions.

The promotion and awareness raising of telephony options and resources amongst VCOs, the development of this guide, and the provision of training and production of useful and relevant resources for the sector has meant that small and medium VCOs are now better equipped to understand their own needs, make strategic provision for telephony (both within budgets and development plans), to see different telephony options as a viable opportunity which adds value to their activities, and to make an informed choice as to telephony use and application.

Matt Legg

ICT Commissioning and Corporate Development Manager, ICT Hub

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Introduction

Despite the massive growth of texting, webchat, email and other forms of remote communication, you only have to spend a couple of minutes in any public environment to realise that we haven't stopped talking to each other over the phone. We are doing it more than ever, and some of us don't seem to know how (or when) to stop! The speed, immediacy and interactivity of a telephone call gives it a clear advantage over other forms of communication, and this is as relevant for voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) as it is for other sectors.

Important as voice communication is, it has not established a high profile within Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which tends to be perceived as covering computers, networks and internet connections. But there is a clear need for a guide like this. In 2006, research commissioned by the ICT Hub found that VCOs had a high level of interest in telephony facilities. They were interested in the benefits that telephony can provide, such as saving time and money, generating income and extending accessibility. But they were unlikely to have incorporated telephony into their ICT plans, let alone their strategic plans. Many VCOs were without independent sources of advice on telephony, and most reported negative experiences with suppliers.

This guide aims to raise the profile of telephony and to empower people in the sector to make it work for them. It focuses on the range of products, services and technologies that aid remote voice communication as opposed to text or email.

The guide is aimed at managers and trustees within voluntary and community organisations in England. It does not assume anything other than a basic familiarity with IT and telephone systems. We do not aim to *explain* the technology in technical detail but are much more interested in how you can benefit from it in the VCO context. This isn't just about saying how wonderful it is. It's also about starting from your own needs and budget, making sure you have a longer-term approach to telephony and establishing and maintaining constructive partnerships with your suppliers.

This guide was compiled between November 2007 and February 2008. It takes into account the state of the telephony market at that time. If you're picking this up in 2010, then there will have been technical advances which will have invalidated some of our comments, but the good practice that we promote in strategic planning, cost analysis and supplier management is unlikely to have changed.

Where we talk about 'staff', this may refer to paid staff, volunteers or trustees.

We accept that the term 'service users' has associations within the arenas of mental health and addiction but we mean it to refer to anybody who uses any services that your organisation provides.

Please note that any reference to a particular supplier in this guide does not imply a recommendation.

Technical terms mentioned in the body of the guide which have been defined and discussed in the 'Products, services and facilities' section have been highlighted in **bold**.

1

Identifying your telephony requirements

Assess your needs

Stakeholders and your work

Strategic planning

Identifying your telephony requirements

'What are our telephone requirements? That's easy. Five lines, five phones, a couple of mobiles and a three-year maintenance and insurance contract that covers the lot'.

It may be tempting to express what you need in terms of products or services or, to use the industry jargon, 'solutions'. But it can be more useful for a supplier if you think about what you need to achieve now and in the future, rather than what equipment you think will achieve it.

What are your needs?

- **Do you need to ensure that the majority of your service users can reach somebody at evenings and weekends?**
- **Do you need to minimise the cost of your calls to mobiles or to international destinations?**
- **Do you need to be able to reduce the number of phone call expense claims that you have to process?**

Your current business plan can help you establish your overall requirements, because it should describe which of those things you do at the moment are likely to continue, and which new activities are in the pipeline. Once these are clear, you can begin to assess the implications for telephony. So, given the scope of current and future activity, you should ask yourself a number of questions:

Questions to ask

- **How are our people (staff, volunteers) distributed across different locations?**
- **How mobile do they need to be?**
- **What are the preferred methods of communication between our people?**
- **Who are our donors, funders, service users and partners? What are the method(s) that they prefer to use to communicate with us?**

The nature of your stakeholders, and the context of the work that you do, can affect your telephony requirements.

Stakeholders and your work

- **If you work primarily with people who have voice or hearing impairments, then telephony may be less important and you will need to consider additional options.**
- **If you are delivering advice services to young men, telephony may not be as important in the communications mix as channels such as internet chat or text.**
- **If you work with users face-to-face but acknowledge some of this work could be done more cheaply and conveniently over the phone, then telephony may play an increasingly important role in your organisation.**
- **If your people spend a lot of time managing events or projects in a hectic environment, then mobile communication will be very important.**

It is also useful to take into account any planned IT or ICT developments and check whether these have implications for telephony.

Consider planned developments

- **Are you likely to move premises within the next couple of years? If so, what ICT developments are already planned? If you intend to move to newly built premises, then a VoIP system may look attractive.**
- **Through what devices will your people send and receive emails or texts in the future? If there are plans to give each staff member a smartphone, then giving them a more basic mobile may be surplus to requirements.**

You will notice that we are talking generally about telephony across your organisation, and this is the starting point for a strategic approach. Of course you must take into account the particular needs of specific projects or activities, and we recognise that direct funding for telephony may be easier to achieve. But when new projects are being established and the telephony (and other ICT) implications are not considered as part of a bigger picture, then you could end up with a plethora of expensive and overlapping products, services and suppliers.

Having looked at where the organisation is going, how that affects voice communication and what else is happening in terms of ICT, you should now be able to articulate some telephony requirements. But putting them into practice is a different matter. The rest of this guide aims to help you overcome some of the common barriers to implementing telephony. The guide is designed to:

- Encourage a strategic approach to how telephony is budgeted, managed and reviewed
- Support VCOs in the process of choosing and working with telecoms suppliers
- Plug the knowledge gaps that often affect VCOs by providing an overview of today's telephony technologies, products and services
- Provide details of where to go for independent help and advice.

2

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Costing and funding telephony

As technologies converge, telephony funding will increasingly be absorbed within the cost of setting up and maintaining IT networks and broadband connections. For many VCOs, however, telephony currently attracts a separate and long list of expenses. We have demonstrated this in the following examples. Actual figures will depend on the scale of the system and the level of usage.

Typical telephony expenses

Item	Set-up costs	Recurrent ongoing costs
Traditional **switchboard** and handsets	Time – for choosing and working with a supplier Cost of legal disposal and/or **recycling** of old equipment If purchased outright, equipment including accessories Installation and cabling of **switchboard** and any necessary infrastructure such as **ISDN** lines, power sockets and supply and racking, ventilation and **uninterruptible power supply** Cost of any disruption caused during installation (eg diverting calls to a secondary site) Set-up fee for **DDI** number range Training	*Fixed costs:* Equipment lease/rental **DDI** number range **Hold music** licences Insurance Maintenance (this is not normally included after the first year, so should be seen as an 'additional' cost) *Variable costs:* Power consumption Training for new staff Replacement ear pads and microphones for any **headsets** Time – working with supplier
Mobile phones for the organisation	Time – for choosing and working with a supplier Accessories (eg **Bluetooth**, hands-free kit, extra chargers) Reprinting of business cards with new numbers (if appropriate) Training Policy development (eg on personal use)	*Fixed costs:* Monthly package fees Insurance *Variable costs:* Costs for calls, text and data outside monthly allowance Training for new staff Time – working with supplier

If you are working to a full cost recovery model, you will need to include these costs in the budget allocations. We stress the importance of building training into your budgets – staff are likely to need time away from their roles to be introduced to new systems, and once live, there will be a learning curve before staff are using the systems efficiently.

Top 10 cost traps

The THA has identified the following traps that it can be easy to fall into when buying telephony products or services. You should be wary of the following:

1. Introductory offers

An offer for a telephone service may be presented as a loss-leading £11.99 a month for the first six months. But check what happens after that. If it rises to £25.99 per month, and carries a minimum term of two years, then you would actually save money by choosing a deal with a fixed monthly rate of £21.99.

2. Low rates for certain types of number

Do not be seduced by low rates for calls to certain types of number, as these may be subsidised by other calls. For example, you may pay little or nothing for calls to landlines, but if you make lots of calls to other numbers, this can substantially increase your bill.

3. Use of licences for switchboard facilities

Separate licences may enable facilities such as **call recording** or **voicemail**. If you think you may need these facilities later, check on the cost of activating them by a licence.

4. Capped call charges

A deal that says, for example, that a local call won't cost you more than 10p, looks attractive. But before you accept it, check what evidence you have that a significant proportion of your calls last long enough to cross the 10p threshold. Remember also that the capped call mechanism may make an itemised bill more difficult to understand.

5. Minimum fees, setup fees and per-minute billing for calls

Telephone companies will publish a rate per minute to make calls. But they are less willing to publish any of the following:

- A minimum cost per call
- A set-up fee per call
- Billing by the next whole minute (rather than second).

If you make lots of short calls, these mechanisms can increase your bills substantially. For example, at 5p per minute, ten 20-second calls can cost 17p if they are charged by the second but 50p if they are charged per minute. They can also make your itemised bills confusing.

6. 'Bundled' minutes

In tariffs for landline and mobile services, having the first so many minutes per month 'free' has become the norm, but this can make it harder to evaluate suppliers on a like-for-like basis. When comparing tariffs, work out the total cost for a standard level of activity which takes you outside the bundled allowance.

7. 'Commitment' packages

The world changes in ways we don't expect. A deal that ties you down for more than a year may look attractive, but if circumstances force you to cancel before the end of the term, you may incur heavy penalties which wipe out the original 'saving'. Check these penalties before signing anything.

8. BT's Payphone Access Charge

If you have a freephone (0500, 0800 or 0808) number and you receive a call from a BT payphone, you may be charged an additional premium (at least 10p per minute) to receive the call if your freephone service is not provided by BT.

9. End-of-lease equipment return

Leasing equipment such as a **switchboard** means there is no capital expenditure and spreads the cost of 'ownership', but your contract may require you to return it at the end of the term if you do not want to upgrade it. The costs of ripping it out and sending it back to the leasing company may be prohibitive.

10. VAT

If you want to dispute an item within a bill (eg an inappropriate service charge) and are refunded, then you should make sure that the refund includes VAT where applicable.

Case study – managing demand

The Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) were finding that their phone advisors spent too much time dealing with frequently asked questions about volunteering, HIV statistics and publications. This meant that they had less time to deal with callers whose needs were more complex.

THT reviewed what topics could be addressed using an automated information service and worked with Call Handling (**http://www.callhandling.co.uk**) to establish a call filtering service which is delivered in a friendly manner. This redirects callers with more straightforward needs to pre-recorded announcements and message-leaving facilities so that callers who need most support can be put through to a live advisor.

If the information changes, recordings can be altered easily. The level of filtering can also be increased or decreased as required.

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Call handling:
http://www.callhandling.co.uk

Case study – bringing suppliers together

Cottage and Rural Enterprises (CARE) provides services for people with learning disabilities throughout the UK. Staff work with clients to formulate the most appropriate support programme, providing workshop activities, employment opportunities and varying types of accommodation.

Previously, CARE's telephone setup consisted of three mobile and two fixed line suppliers, leaving their IT Manager, Paul Martin, with a confusing array of provision.

CARE had three requirements. The first was to reduce costs. The second was for clearer billing, which would allow Paul to view itemised calls. The third requirement was for greater control over the **mobile phones**, including the ability to monitor call usage. "Having five different phone suppliers gave us very little control over costs and customer service was also very poor," Paul commented.

CARE approached Alternative Networks (**http://www.alternativenetworks.com**) and asked them to audit CARE's arrangements, taking into account current and future requirements.

To reduce the high monthly mobile costs, Alternative Networks reduced CARE's mobile suppliers from five to one. The most appropriate tariff was selected and better rates were achieved by moving all of the expenditure to one supplier.

In addition to receiving a hard copy of the telephone invoice each month, Alternative Networks also provided access to an online billing system, Clarity, which allows Paul to view all bills and itemised usage information at the click of a button, and to view and analyse summary reports. The system also allows the user to set alerts for certain types of usage such as use of international numbers.

CARE now receives a personalised service in which the supplier's team acts as a central point of contact, assisting with all queries and future requirements.

The benefits to CARE were quickly evident, with the reduction to a single supplier providing a saving of £1,000 in the first six months. "Merging our telecoms from several suppliers to one provided us with significant savings in a relatively short time," said Paul. The system has also resulted in a reduced amount of personal calls.

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Alternative Networks:
http://www.alternativenetworks.com

Top 10 ways to save money on your telephony

1. Look at your bills and the service charges you are incurring. Do you need all of those lines? Are there any old services that are surplus to current or future requirements? For a quick win, see what you can cancel today. In the longer term, you may be able to save on line rental if you have eight or more lines by installing **ISDN**.

2. If you have staff at different sites who need to talk to each other a lot, then eliminate internal call costs by using a **VoIP** application such as Skype.

3. Are you on tariffs which reflect your current spread of calls to local, long-distance, mobile and international numbers? If not, review these with your supplier and/or consider an **indirect access** service.

4. Could you consolidate some or all of your telephony services so that you are dealing with fewer suppliers? Now that non-BT companies can provide line rental, and mobile networks can provide fixed-line services, you may able to simplify things and attract more of a discount by having a higher overall spend with each of a smaller number of suppliers. If you have two or more different telephone systems, consider using a single supplier to maintain them.

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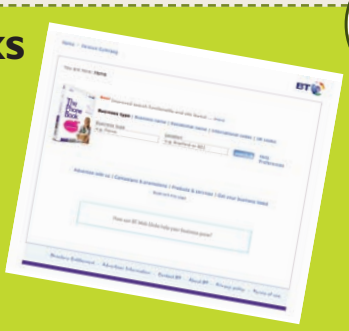

Online directory: http://www.118500.com.

5. Do you use all of the features on your mobiles? You may be able to save money by switching to simpler equipment. There are now **SIM**-only deals available on mobiles, which save you and the phone company money if you don't need the latest phone every year.

6. Ensure mobile phone chargers are switched off or unplugged when not in use.

7. Rather than using **premium-rate 118 directory enquiry services** to find telephone numbers, use free services such as 0800 100 100 or online alternatives such as BT's **http://www.118500.com**.

8. If you are looking to save money on telephone hardware, then some suppliers such as Nimans offer pre-owned equipment which is refurbished and has a 12 month warranty. But be aware that parts for older systems may be harder to replace.

9. You can also realise savings by sharing the cost of services or systems with partners. For example:

- Agencies in the same building could share common telephony equipment such as lines and handsets rather than having their own separate systems.
- Agencies in the same building can share any 'reception' staff for their main **switchboard** numbers. The **switchboard** can be set up so that the person taking the call knows which number is being called so can greet the caller with the name of the corresponding VCO.
- Agencies in the same subject area but with different capacities and opening hours can make arrangements for sharing, diverting, overflowing and transferring calls between more easily between them.
- Such arrangements do need co-ordinating and require a degree of trust from each of the parties involved, but can deliver savings (or act as a source of income) in the longer term and may be a catalyst for mutually beneficial collaboration in other areas.

10. **Outsourcing** a function such as donation processing or campaign response handling to an external organisation can save money where you do not have the skills, resources or economies of scale to do this internally.

Case study – Improving accessibility and productivity and reducing costs through VoIP

The support workers at The Housing Link, a homelessness charity with four residences, had to consult with each other many times a day whilst providing support services to their residents. In most cases, the consultations were carried out by phone with support workers in one of the other residences and the charity was spending over £500 per year on local phone calls. In addition, as many of the support workers moved between the three locations each day, it was often difficult to actually locate them. With limited funding, a requirement to keep overhead costs as low as possible, and a need to improve consultations the charity had to find a better way for support workers to contact each other, without restricting working methods.

Glideslope provided a two-stage solution. First, a secure intranet was installed between the three residences using a **broadband** connection and a **virtual private network** (VPN). 'Profiles' were set up so that each worker was able to use any of the networked computers at the three residences. Then, **VoIP**-enabled telephone handsets and compatible messaging software were installed on the charity's computers. The messaging software was integrated into the above profiles so that no matter which computer a support worker was using, they could still be contacted on their phone number without the caller needing to know which location they were in. The system is used extensively and has cut the charity's overheads by approximately £500 per year and has also allowed support workers and their manager to operate from home.

Case study – a replacement telephone system

LASA is a medium sized charity with about thirty staff based on two floors of an office building in London. Their original telephone set-up consisted of 20 **analogue** lines, with some going to individuals, others to groups, plus two fax machines and two helplines. Although the system was reliable, LASA needed to review it because:

- Line rental costs were high
- Many staff would have benefitted from **DDI** numbers but only few had them
- **Voicemail** was haphazard
- Any changes to the system necessitated expensive call-out charges
- There were several suppliers – and bills – involved.

LASA shortlisted four suppliers. All recommended moving to BT-supplied **ISDN** in order to save line rental and provide for **DDI** numbers. Three of them recommended an entirely new switch and handsets from Avaya to take advantage of the new digital technology, at a cost of around £10,000. A fourth supplier, called Voice Services, suggested using a reconditioned **switchboard**, a solution which cost less than half of that quoted by the others. Voice Services proposed the existing handsets could still be used, which also cut down the training requirement.

LASA, aware that some changes were needed but unwilling to put major expenditure into it given that the march of **VoIP** could well necessitate another upgrade in a few years, decided to work with Voice Services.

The transition was not, however, problem free. LASA found that lack of clarity about which numbers could be kept and which would be lost, and organisational restructuring meant that BT's role in the implementation was unsatisfactory. LASA had also not reckoned with needing to continue to rent several **analogue** lines, so cost savings weren't as great as anticipated. Some of the newly installed equipment was faulty and spare parts were not available quickly. Lastly, the new equipment did not have all the functionality expected, and so some newer handsets needed to be purchased.

However, two years on, LASA has been pleased by:

- The willingness of the supplier to seek a solution based on LASA's needs and budgets
- The helpful attitude of the supplier when any questions or problems arose (LASA called them in for a meeting to outline and address several teething difficulties)
- The added flexibility that LASA now has to allocate and change **DDI** numbers
- The simplicity of having all items on a single bill
- The overall saving in line rental, which means the system has almost paid for itself.

A business case for telephony

It should be clear to funders that inadequate telephony will frustrate you and compromise your relationship with stakeholders – including funders and service users. But it can still be a challenge to afford telephony products or services. If you can identify the 'hot topics' on your funder's agenda, then you may be able to convince them to invest in telephony products or services which bring benefits in relation to those topics. This may include:

- Systems that allow staff or volunteers to work from home, and can therefore engage a potentially more diverse workforce including people with disabilities, as well as cutting down on travel time and costs, and reducing your organisation's carbon footprint.
- Telephony used as a cheaper alternative to a face-to-face enquiry service. Setting up a dedicated telephone line as a first point of contact with your VCO can allow you to screen enquiries. People with straightforward enquiries, or with a higher capacity for helping themselves, can be provided with information or advice straight away without the need for a more time-consuming personal appointment. People with more complex enquiries, or with a lower capacity for helping themselves, can be prioritised for face-to-face work, making the most cost-effective use of staff resources. This model of deflecting demand was a factor behind the introduction of NHS Direct.
- **Non-geographic numbers** (such as those starting 0845) that allow incoming calls to be routed across different sites in accordance with criteria including time of day and origin of call. They can also support business continuity, allowing calls to be diverted to a secondary site in the event of a critical incident affecting the primary site.
- Use of three-way conferencing to make interpreting services accessible to those who are unable to speak English.
- A **textphone** service, which extends choice of access for people with speech or hearing impairments and sends out a message that your organisation is serious about its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

3

Choosing and working with telecoms suppliers

Assessing suppliers

Ten top tips for selecting a supplier

Pricing

Signing an agreement

Minimise disruption

Contacts

Review

Dispute resolution

Switching provider

3

Choosing and working with telecoms suppliers

In 2006, the THA asked 231 voluntary and community organisations about their response to the following statements about their telecoms suppliers:

- **Suppliers had a customer orientation (ie that they were needs-led rather than product-led).**
- **Products and services supplied met their needs**
- **Suppliers took account of the voluntary sector context of customers**
- **There were clear contact points between supplier and customer**
- **Suppliers were responsive to problems.**

The overall attitude to suppliers was equivocal, with the 'neither agree nor disagree' response being the most common in the areas of customer orientation (51%), meeting needs (46%) and responsiveness to problems (50%). Suppliers came off best in regard to clear contact points, with 36% agreeing or strongly agreeing that this was the case. They fared worst in regard to taking account of charity status, with 41% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that this was the case.

Suppliers were especially unpopular with certain types of organisations. None of the respondents serving rural areas, and none of the respondents with an annual turnover under £25,000 strongly agreed with any of the statements. There was a perception that telecoms suppliers only value the relationships that they have with larger organisations.

From that analysis, it would seem that small to medium-sized voluntary agencies are not best placed to establish and maintain good working relationships with suppliers. However, with a bit of care and co-ordination, your supplier could actually become an ally rather than somebody you have to contend with.

Ten top tips for selecting a supplier

Let's start off at the commissioning stage. If you have decided what your business requirements are and have an indication of the likely budget, then you are ready to enter the market.

1. Consult the ICT Hub suppliers database at **http://directory.icthub.org.uk** and look for suppliers in the area of telephony. Each supplier has been given references by two voluntary agencies and can offer a discount to the sector.

2. If the supplier you have in mind hasn't registered, ask them to supply a reference and make contact with the agency they give you to check their experience of working with that supplier.

3. Be clear about what you want to achieve as an organisation with your telephony (not just for a single project), by when you would like to achieve it, and what the volumes of activity (eg inbound or outbound calls) are likely to be.

4. If you are looking at buying a system that is critical to your needs and costs more than a few thousand pounds, you may wish to issue a written tender notice to three or four suppliers and ask them to quote to your requirements by a specific (reasonable) deadline. That way, you will be able to compare the suppliers on a like-for-like basis.

5. If appropriate, ask to meet not just the salesperson but either an account manager or a technician, or ideally both. This will not just give you a more rounded discussion, it will also introduce you to the people you would be likely to work with after any deal is closed. Remember, you're buying a relationship as well as a product or a service.

6. Work out which staff from your own organisation need to be present at the meeting with a prospective supplier. If you have an IT or ICT Manager, they should probably be there.

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ICT Hub suppliers database: http://directory.icthub.org.uk

7. If you are doing something that relies on other suppliers, for example installing a **switchboard** supplied by someone other than BT but connecting to BT infrastructure, it may be worth bringing them in to the same meeting. In any event, be clear about who is responsible for liaison with secondary suppliers.

8. Prepare all of your questions ahead of the meeting, noting the responses as you go.

9. Score suppliers for how much they demonstrate interest in your work. They should ask questions both to establish rapport but also to find out about the total telephony requirement for your work. The nature of your work may be a nice change from some of the more corporate environments in which they operate, so they may also be curious. But if they don't seem interested in what you do at this stage, they're hardly likely to be responsive to your changing circumstances later.

10. Once they have impressed you with their patter about a product or service, it is then important to touch, feel and test it out wherever this is possible. Many suppliers can showcase their systems for you on their own premises. Some can demonstrate certain things over the web and others may suggest you visit a site where a system is in operation. This is where managers should stand back and let end users have a go. A competitively priced system from a great supplier will fail if it is difficult to use on the front line. However, it is important to distinguish between reactions which are about change ('I don't like this system. We're accustomed to the old system and it is fine. I don't see why we need to change.') and those that are about the actual operation of the system ('Even when we get used to this system, it will take twice as long to do each of the most common things we will need to do with it, and it won't be easy to train up colleagues').

Pricing

When it's time to talk about pricing, it's important to run though all the set-up and recurrent cost headings discussed in the previous section, so that before you start negotiating, you have a sense of the total cost of ownership of a new system. That's when the account manager is useful to have in the meeting, because they are more likely to know about after-sales costs.

Investigate discounts

- **Can you get a discount because you are a charity?**
- **Can you give the supplier a 'free' ad in your newsletter in exchange for a discount?**
- **Do they have any end-of-line equipment or software that they can offer at a reduced price?**
- **Is there any low-risk brand new equipment or software that they can pilot with you at a reduced price?**
- **Are there any related ICT services that the supplier could also offer, where you would end up with a net saving?**

Signing an agreement

Before you sign any agreement, it is essential to read the small print.

Things to check

- **Minimum term of the agreement – it must be reasonable in relation to your known income sources and timescales**
- **Costs or penalties of any early termination of the agreement**
- **What happens at the end of an agreement period if you decide not to renew with this supplier**
- **Payment schedules, in particular regarding first and last payments.**

If you are not satisfied with what is being offered, be prepared to walk away from any negotiations, whether the sticking points are about price or not. You may have lost a little time in the discussions you have had with a supplier, but this is better than losing out in the long term with something that doesn't meet your needs. If the supplier you walk away from doesn't come back with a better offer, consider re-approaching suppliers that you have rejected in the past – their people, products and prices may have all changed since you last had contact with them.

Minimise disruption

If you are replacing a critical system like a **switchboard**, consider the potential for installation to disrupt your normal day-to-day work.

How to minimise disruption

- **Have a staged transition from old to new systems where this is appropriate**
- **Aim to install a system over a weekend or at a time when you expect few or no calls (this may be more costly but less disruptive, as long as changes can be made to all relevant elements, eg new lines or broadband connections and new equipment, outside working hours)**
- **Arrange to divert incoming calls to a secondary site during any period of disruption, or set up a message on the external telephone number so that anyone who calls your number(s) hears that you are temporarily unavailable by telephone but can still be contacted by email and so on.**

Contacts

It is also important to agree contract management arrangements. It is essential to have two or three contacts at the supplier end (one contact is too few because you will only ever need them when they are on leave) with a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. It is also necessary to channel your organisation's contact with the supplier through a small number of people at your end. Misunderstandings can easily occur if several people in your organisation, all with different knowledge and skills about telephony and different expectations of the supplier, are having independent contact with several people at the supplier end. It is helpful to have a log of all contact with the supplier, particularly where things go wrong, so you have a central source of evidence if problems cannot be resolved.

Check bills

You should check bills for accuracy of what they include, but also for any omissions. If your supplier has forgotten to include a service charge this quarter, it is better to tell them and pay next month than to be landed with a huge bill in the future when they have realised their mistake – and when you can't pay for it.

Review

It can be useful to agree a review point in any contract period where you sit down with the supplier and feed back on the product or service you have received. The supplier will be particularly interested in this if you give an indication that you may want to spend more money with them, but even if you don't, it's an opportunity for you to update them on future needs and for them to update you on industry developments. Prepare for this review by looking at what other suppliers are doing and how much they are charging, so that you are demonstrating that you are aware of the market – then ask for a discount!

Problem solving

Where problems do occur, you should focus on making clear the gap between the service you have been led to expect and what you have actually experienced. Be calm but persistent in your presentation – letting off steam or getting angry with the supplier might make you feel better in the short term but is more likely to generate a defensive response than an immediate resolution. Facts, rather than feelings, may be more constructive, particularly in writing.

Dispute resolution

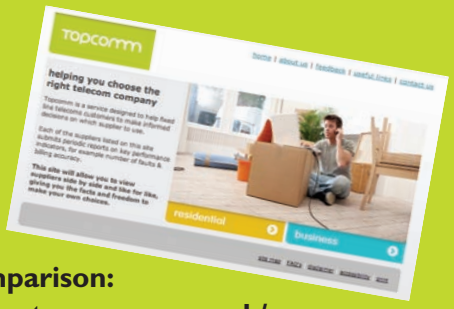
If you are unable to resolve a dispute with a company providing a telephone service, that company will be a member of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme. The ADR scheme brings in an independent agency that can investigate and decide what action needs to be taken. Most UK telephone companies belong to the Office of the Telecommunications Ombudsman (OTELO, **http://www.otelo.org.uk/**) which is open to consumers and small businesses including charities. Details of the relevant ADR scheme appear on your phone bill.

Switching provider

If you are unhappy with the costs, reliability, customer service or other aspect of your telephone company, or even if you aren't, you are entitled to switch to another provider. You can compare service quality information (but not prices) for several larger telephone companies at **http://www.topcomm.org.uk/**. In theory, it should be easy to switch provider and to keep your existing number (this is sometimes called 'porting' your number). In practice, however, the THA has found that this is not always quick or even possible because the process depends upon the existence of agreements between telephone service providers and the networks that operate on their behalf. Before you agree to move providers, check that porting will be possible and, if so, how long it is likely to take.

weblinks

Office of the Telecommunications Ombudsman (OTELO, http://www.otelo.org.uk/)



Cost comparison: http://www.topcomm.org.uk/

4

Products, services and facilities to meet your telephony requirements

4

Products, services and facilities to meet your telephony requirements

This is an A to Z of what's available now. It runs from two-way radio through textphones to VoIP. Irrespective of the age of the technology, the focus is firmly on application to the sector. We have tried to be even-handed in our consideration of costs and benefits – the most suitable package for an individual organisation is likely to be a combination of some of the facilities listed here.

03 NUMBERS

In 2007, Ofcom introduced the 03 range of numbers to combine the benefits of **non-geographic numbers** with reasonable call costs. The ranges 0300, 0303 and 0306 are reserved for non-profit organisations, but further ranges are available starting 0345 and 0370 for any organisations who wish to 'migrate' from 0845 or **0870** numbers. Calls to 03 numbers are charged to the caller as if they are using a standard geographic number, from whatever network (landline, **mobile**, **VoIP** or **payphone**) they are calling from. This means that calls to these numbers will be included in any allowances covered by contract fees. However, organisations using these numbers will be charged to receive calls on them. At the time of writing, the cost of receiving 03 calls is similar to the cost of receiving freephone calls, ie between 2p and 5p per minute.

0500 NUMBERS – see Freephone numbers

070 NUMBERS – see Personal numbers

080 NUMBERS – see Freephone numbers

084 NUMBERS

A range of **non-geographic numbers** starting 0844 or 0845. Often misleadingly described as 'local rate', the cost of calls to these numbers from BT landlines can be up to 5p per minute, whereas the cost from mobile networks and payphones can be significantly higher. Calls to these numbers are not normally included in any allowances covered by contract fees. However, organisations receiving calls on these numbers are charged less to receive these calls than in the case of **03** or **freephone** numbers, and, in particular on 0844 numbers, may be entitled to a modest income or **revenue share**.

0870 NUMBERS

A range of **non-geographic numbers**. Often misleadingly described as 'national rate', the cost of calls to these numbers from BT landlines can be up to 8p per minute, whereas the cost from mobile networks and payphones can be significantly higher. Calls to these numbers are not normally included in any allowances covered by contract fees. However, organisations receiving calls on these numbers are entitled to **revenue share**. The high cost of calling 0870 numbers has earned them a poor public reputation and Ofcom is likely to discontinue the use of **revenue share** on 0870 numbers during 2008.

0871 NUMBERS – see Premium rate numbers

09 NUMBERS – see Premium rate numbers

118 NUMBERS – see Directory Enquiry services

1470 SERVICE – see Withholding your number

1471 SERVICE – see Calling Line Identification

ADSL – see Broadband

ANSWERPHONE – see Voicemail

AUTOMATIC CALL DISTRIBUTION (ACD)

If you receive many incoming calls to a single number, they are usually delivered to lines in strict sequence. Line 1 rings first, but if it is busy, Line 2 rings. If Lines 1 and 2 are busy, Line 3 rings, and so on. If a different call handler is allocated to each line, the call handler at Line 1 takes the majority of calls, followed by the call handler at Line 2 and so on.

An ACD facility means that incoming calls can be distributed in other ways across call handlers. The most common method of distributing calls is to send the next call to the call handler who has been waiting the longest. This evens out the spread of calls.

If a group of people are handling incoming calls at the same site, the ACD facility is usually part of the **switchboard**. However, where the team of call handlers is spread across several locations, including staff or volunteers working from home, the 'clever stuff' of call distribution is handled either by the external telephone network or, if each site or home base has the appropriate broadband connection and PC software/hardware, by a **VoIP** system. The system can be set up to route calls according to certain rules, including:

- Sending the next call to the person who has been waiting the longest, wherever they are geographically.
- Trying sites in a specified order so that some locations are prioritised and others act as an 'overflow'.
- Routing calls to different locations at specific times.
- Attempting in the first instance to the send the call to the location which is geographically closest to the caller, with a secondary arrangement for situations when the closest location is busy. This method works well for calls made from geographic landline numbers but it can be complex and expensive to identify the geographic location of a call made from a mobile, so calls made from mobiles may need to be handled by a single site.
- A combination of the above rules.

These multi-site ACD arrangements are sometimes referred to as virtual private networks (VPNs), virtual call centres or Centrex.

BLUETOOTH

A short-wave communications 'standard' that allows devices to be connected without wires. A Bluetooth-enabled **mobile phone** can be connected to a **headset** so that the phone can be used on a hands-free basis, which is essential for use whilst driving but may also be convenient for staff who need to spend a lot of time on a **mobile phone**. Some Bluetooth **headsets** are now available for landline desk phones (although **headsets** may use other wireless standards).

When choosing a **headset**, it will need to be compatible with the phone you have and to fit comfortably (particularly if you already wear glasses). Like a mobile phone, a Bluetooth headset needs to be re-charged after a few hours of 'talk time'.

BROADBAND

The main method of providing services over the internet, which includes carrying **VoIP** traffic. Broadband connections using traditional copper cables are called Asymetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) connections.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY – see Diversion of calls, Non-geographic numbers and Uninterruptible Power Supply

CALL BARRING

Call barring prevents calls from being made to expensive international or **premium-rate numbers**. It can be set up through your **switchboard** or your telephone service provider. A call barring arrangement usually has an override

facility so that authorised staff have access to make legitimate use of these numbers.

CALL CENTRE

A facility to centralise the handling of incoming or outgoing calls. This can be a single site or spread across several locations as a **virtual call centre**. A facility to centralise the handling of several types of contacts (such as phone calls, emails, letters and text messages) is known as a contact centre.

See also Outsourcing.

CALL DIVERSION – see Diversion of calls

CALL LOGGER – see Itemised billing

CALL RECORDING AND LISTENING-IN

The ability to record and listen in to calls can help to:

- Check that the way calls are handled is in line with policies and procedures.
- Ensure that your telephone systems are being used by staff for valid business purposes.
- Provide a record of transactions for security purposes.

Call recording and listening-in facilities may be available from:

- Your own **switchboard**
- The external telephone network (these facilities are more widely available if you use a **non-geographic number**)
- A **VoIP** system.

Where you have more than location, or if you have staff or volunteers working from home, then it is possible using the external network or **VoIP** facilities to listen in remotely.

The practice of call recording and listening-in is governed by several pieces of legislation. The key points are:

- Employers may listen in to calls that their employees make on a workplace phone system provided that the monitoring relates to the business and that the employer makes reasonable efforts to inform employees that their calls may be monitored.
- If the content of any calls that are recorded includes names, addresses, and other information that identifies living individuals, then this is 'personal data' and falls under the provisions of the Data Protection Act. Callers should therefore be made aware of this. If every call is recorded, callers should be advised of this in a pre-recorded message at the start of the call. However, services that record a small sample of calls may prefer to mention this in written publicity – this would be more appropriate for a confidential helpline.

As well as the legal considerations, there are some other issues to take into account when thinking about call recording and listening-in:

- Time is required for discussion with staff before implementing a system.
- If recordings are stored in your **switchboard** or your own computer network, there needs to be sufficient capacity to hold them for your needs.
- In traditional, non-**VoIP** systems, recording or listening-in to a call takes up an additional line.
- Time is required to select, listen to and take any action on the calls you have recorded.

CALL ROUTING – see Non-geographic numbers

CALLING LINE IDENTIFICATION OR CALLER LINE IDENTITY (CLI)

A CLI function shows you the telephone number of the person who is calling you. If that number is stored in an electronic list against the caller's name, then a CLI function will display that name. This means that, as long as no more than one person calls you from the same number, you can greet your caller appropriately, or choose not to answer their call if you wish. This is a standard feature on **mobile phones**, **ISDN** services and in **VoIP**. On landline phones, it is also known as 'caller display' and is available free to BT residential customers and for a nominal cost per quarter to businesses and charities.

Some VCOs who operate confidential, anonymous helplines ask their telephone company to suppress the presentation of CLI data to their lines or **switchboards** so that there is no possibility of using services such as 1471 to trace the call. Others program their **switchboards** so that the incoming number is not shown on those telephones that have displays.

CAPTIONED TELEPHONY – see Textphone

CARRIER PRE-SELECTION – see Indirect access

CELL PHONES

Another term for **mobile phones**, used because these phones connect to a network of base stations or cells.

CENTREX – see Automatic Call Distribution

CHANNEL – see Line

CONTACT CENTRE – see Call centre

CORDLESS SYSTEMS – see **Bluetooth**, DECT and Headsets

COMPUTER-TELEPHONY INTEGRATION (CTI)

CTI comes from the days before **VoIP**, when special software and hardware was needed to link telephone systems to computer systems. The most common application of CTI is 'screen-popping', where the CLI of an incoming call is checked against a customer database and opens the relevant database record on the call handler's screen. This can allow a VCO with large numbers of service users, donors or members to deal more quickly and efficiently with enquiries. It can also be used to route calls from individual numbers to specific call handlers or departments. However, the needs of an individual may change over time, so routing this way may not always be appropriate.

CONFERENCE CALLS – see Teleconferencing

CONFERENCE PHONES – see Speakerphones

CONVERGENCE

Convergence is the coming together of previously separate technologies. For example:

- Telephone calls can now be made over the internet (see **VoIP**).
- Single devices such as **smartphones** can accommodate multiple applications such as phone calls, texts, emails and internet.
- Single devices such as the BT Fusion phone can operate using a wireless **VoIP**-type connection or, when out of wireless range, a standard mobile network. It is also possible to buy **DECT** phones that can accommodate both a standard landline and a **VoIP** connection.

DECT (DIGITAL ENHANCED CORDLESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS)

This is the technology behind the digital cordless handsets which are now common in homes. They can be useful in a VCO context if staff move around a lot within a larger building but need to talk to each other frequently. This may be relevant for a VCO which operates a depot or warehouse, or a VCO whose functions are spread across different floors in the same building. Once you have paid for the handsets, the cost of DECT calls between staff is usually zero. Sound quality from DECT phones is also superior to that of mobiles, and there are now DECT phones that work with **VoIP** systems. But like mobiles, operation of DECT handsets is limited to the charge left in the battery.

DIRECT DIAL IN (DDI) NUMBERS

A DDI system allows each person in the organisation to have their own external number. DDI numbers are normally purchased in blocks of 10 or more. There is usually a small set-up and recurrent charge for the block itself. If you already have a **switchboard** and handsets, you will need to pay for your supplier to re-program these to work with the new numbers.

If staff have their own DDI number, better use can be made of any reception staff, who can focus on people contacting the organisation for the first time and on face-to-face visitors. Callers who have an existing relationship with particular members of staff can call them directly or leave a message.

Using DDI numbers also means that number-specific data may be available. For example, your telephone company may be able to **itemise** the phone bills by DDI number.

DIRECTORY ENQUIRY SERVICES

Since the original 192 directory enquiry service ended in 2003, hundreds of services on numbers starting 118 have become available. These can be expensive to use, particularly if you allow the operator to connect you directly to the number you

want, which means that the rest of the call can cost as much as 30p per minute. If your staff have internet access, there are free online alternatives such as BT's service on **http://www.118500.com**. There is also a **freephone** service, 0800 100 100, which provides the answer to a free enquiry after a 20-second advertising message.

See also Premium rate numbers.

DISPOSAL – see Recycling

DIVERSION OF CALLS

Most landline and mobile networks can provide for incoming calls for one number to be diverted to another number, which can be useful for those on the move all the time. A **switchboard** can be equipped with a 'mobile extension' facility which automatically calls a specific mobile whenever a call is made to an associated extension. This means that the mobile of a staff member can be used as if it were a **switchboard** extension.

Calls can also be diverted as part of a routing plan associated with a **non-geographic number**.

Call diversion is clearly convenient, but in most cases the organisation has to pay the cost of the diverted call as if they were making it themselves. The cost is usually more expensive if a call is diverted to a mobile number. Another thing to bear in mind with most diversion facilities is that they require users to remember when to cancel the diversion. Users who forget to do this when appropriate may end up losing calls.

FOLLOW-ME NUMBERS – see Personal numbers

FORWARDING CALLS – see Diversion of calls

FREEPHONE NUMBERS

A range of **non-geographic numbers** starting 0500, 0800 or 0808. It is free to call these numbers from UK landlines and BT **payphones**, and these calls are not itemised on bills (this makes them attractive for confidential helplines). However, mobile networks do charge callers to use most freephone numbers, and calls to these numbers are not normally included in any allowances covered by mobile contract fees. Non-BT **payphones**, including hospital phones, may also charge for these calls. Organisations receiving calls on these numbers are charged to receive calls, typically between 2p and 5p per minute.

See also Payphones.

GEOGRAPHIC NUMBERS

A number that indicates the location from which a call is being made, although **VoIP** technology makes it possible to assign a geographic number to a user that can be operated from any location. In the UK, geographic numbers start 01 or 02.

GSM

This stands for Global System for Mobile Communications and is the technical standard used for **mobile phones**, which are sometimes referred to as GSM phones.

HEADSETS

Headsets are useful for people who spend a lot of time either making or taking calls, particularly where they need to keep both hands free for typing or using other resources. They can incorporate noise cancelling circuitry to cut out background noise. They can be cordless, which may be useful where staff are handling a call which requires them to consult resources which are at the other side of the office. However, they can be very expensive (up to £200), and you need to ensure that the headsets you buy will be compatible with your telephone or computer equipment. Noise at work regulations dictate that the output of your headset must not exceed a volume of 87 dB (**http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf**). If you intend to have more than one person use the same headset, you will need to buy each user their own headphone pads and microphone for hygiene reasons. You will also need to clean and replace these items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

See also **Bluetooth**.

HEARING AID COMPATIBILITY

Corded landline telephones are usually marked with an ear symbol if they are hearing aid compatible. Using a hearing aid with a **mobile phone**, or a digital cordless landline phone, may cause

interference, so it worth trying one out before you buy. There are now some hearing-aid compatible **headsets** available such as the GN Netcom 2100 Telecoil (which costs between £150 and £200). To use compatible phones with a hearing aid, you will need to switch the hearing aid to the 'T' position. More information is available at **http://www.rnid.org.uk**.

HOLD MUSIC

Whilst many of us object to the choice of music whilst we **queue** to get through to a service, the key function of the music is useful in that it tells us we are still holding. Hold music can be delivered from a device such as a CD or mp3 player connected to a **switchboard**. If you use commercially available music, then you will need to register with the Performing Rights Society (PRS) (**http://www.mcps-prs-alliance.co.uk**) and purchase an annual licence to use this. The cost of the licence depends on the number of external lines that you have, but starts off at around £100 for up to 5 lines. As an alternative, you can purchase CDs which contain music for which a copyright licence is not needed (usually because the music was written a long time ago).

The PRS recommends that you choose music that reflects the style of your organisation and change it frequently.

HOMEWORKERS – see Automatic call distribution, Call recording and listening-in, Non-geographic numbers

INDIRECT ACCESS

If you would like to save money on outgoing calls but do not wish to change your landline or mobile telephone service provider, you can sign up to a secondary supplier such as Primus or Swiftcall. This will allow you to keep the line or service rental with one company but have flexibility on call costs. This may benefit a VCO that does international work and makes calls to numbers in the same country frequently. With indirect access, organisations are billed by the secondary supplier for the calls they make via that supplier. The simplest indirect access systems require the user to dial a prefix before dialling the number they want. If, however, regular landline use is envisaged, then arrangements can be made at the **switchboard** or BT exchange level so that all outgoing calls in a certain category are automatically handled by the secondary supplier. This is called least cost routing or carrier pre-selection.

INTERPRETING SERVICES

For VCOs who deal with occasional requests to speak to someone in a language other than English, an interpreting service such as Language Line (http://www.languageline.co.uk/) can help. The call handler puts the caller on hold, calls the interpreting service and asks for an interpreter in the language concerned. Within a couple of minutes, the three parties can be engaged in a teleconference. Remote interpreting services can be arranged quickly and be billed on a per-minute 'pay-as-you-go' basis (around £2.50 per minute). Introducing a third party may make the interaction more complex for the VCO, but may be preferable for the service user because they do not need to use an English-speaking friend or relative to deal with the service on their behalf.

ISDN SERVICES

ISDN stands for Integrated Services Digital Network. If you have ISDN lines, rather than standard analogue lines, then you can transmit both voice and data. Sound quality on ISDN is better than on a conventional analogue system. When you use ISDN lines in conjunction with a **switchboard**, you can make different lines, extension numbers, handsets and **DDI numbers** work together more flexibly. For example, the same extension can receive calls made to several different external **DDI** telephone numbers.

They are two main types of ISDN. Multiples of two-line ISDN2 is appropriate for smaller organisations. If however, you require 8 or more **lines**, ISDN30 is more suitable.

Before **broadband** connections became ubiquitous, ISDN was also used as a means of accessing the internet which was faster than dial-up. ISDN is still used for video-conferencing and radio broadcasting.

ITEMISED BILLING

Itemised billing allows you to assess the spread and cost of your outgoing calls, in particular to expensive **directory enquiry**, international and premium rate numbers.

If you need more detail and are able to set aside time to analyse this detail, then a **call logger** can help. This is a device which is built into or can be connected to an existing **switchboard** and provides historical information about activity at each extension – what numbers it has called, how long has been spent on each call, and how many calls it has taken. If you have several departments and prefer to budget for their telephone costs separately, then using data from a call logger alongside bills from your telephone company can help you divide the total bill proportionately. It can also identify unauthorised use of calls to expensive numbers.

If you use a **VoIP** system, however, this level of information will be available more readily.

IVR (INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE)

IVR has become an umbrella term for all types of automated telephone response, including **voicemail**, menu and queueing systems. Typically used in a medium-sized VCO and part of a more complex **switchboard**, IVR allows calls to be filtered to appropriate departments and leaves the reception staff to handle non-routine or multiple-issue enquiries. It also allows you to offer pre-recorded information which responds to questions that users frequently ask without talking to them. This can be particularly helpful if you have line capacity but not staff capacity, and if your service users do not have internet access.

Menu options can be activated either by numbered options or by the words spoken by the caller.

IVR has earned a bad reputation with the public because systems have been designed from the perspective of the organisation rather than that of the caller. Long lists of options have been announced at great speed and in company jargon, with no thought of the caller's ability to retain, let alone understand the information. An industry body called the Employers Forum on Disability has recommended that there are no more three levels of menu and that each menu has no more than four options. These options should be announced slowly and clearly. The Forum has published a guide called 'Barrier Free Call Routing – Designing Customer-Focused Inclusive Telephone Access' which may be downloaded from **http://www.employers-forum.co.uk**.

LEASED LINE

A leased line is a dedicated private link between two or more sites. It can be used to carry both voice and data traffic. Unlike public **broadband**, speed and sound quality are not affected by how much use the system is receiving at a particular time, but costs can be high.

LEAST COST ROUTING – see Indirect access

LINE

The capacity of traditional, non-**VoIP** systems is determined by the number of lines available, with each line able to handle a single incoming or outgoing telephone conversation. Lines are sometimes called trunks or channels. With a basic service, one line serves each phone or handset in your office and attracts its own line rental. However, if you have a **switchboard** and a more flexible **ISDN** system, you can save on line rental in the longer term because you can have fewer lines than you have extensions or handsets (because not all of your people will need to use their phone all of the time). If, on the other hand, you have a constant high demand of incoming calls, you may need more lines than phones so that callers can queue. See also Voicemail.

LISTENING-IN – see Call recording and listening-in

LOCAL PRESENCE NUMBERS – see Non-geographic numbers

LOCAL RATE – see 084 numbers

MINICOM – see Textphone

MOBILE PHONES

If you have several staff who are frequently on the

move outside an office base, then it may be worth equipping them with dedicated mobile phones. Mobile networks, and telephone companies acting on their behalf, can make arrangements for several phones under a single contract. Contracts can incorporate 'free' calls between mobiles under the same contract, free calls to certain numbers or geographic area codes, and can span any allowance of included minutes across all the mobiles in the contract rather than having an allowance for each individual phone. Billing can also be centralised and simplified. It is worth being clear, however, about how the contract is affected if a named user leaves your organisation within its minimum period.

Because mobile phones are so convenient, it can be tempting to use them indoors, where other, cheaper options (such as landline or **VoIP**) are available. If staff make lots of external calls from an office environment, costs can be reduced by encouraging use of these options.

You can also reduce costs by operating a policy on personal use of company mobile phones. In order to distinguish more clearly between business and personal use, it is now possible to operate two accounts on the same phone, where each account has its own number, ringtone and billing. Setting this up on an employee's existing mobile phone may be cheaper than setting up a brand new phone for their business use. It may also be more convenient for the staff member.

It is now illegal to use a hand-held phone whilst driving. Drivers can also be prosecuted for using a hands-free phone if they are not in proper control of the vehicle. Employers could be liable to prosecution if they require or allow employees to use a mobile phone while driving for work.

See also GSM and SIM card.

MONITORING CALLS – see Call recording and listening-in

MUSIC ON HOLD – see Hold music

NATIONAL RATE – see 0870 numbers

NON-GEOGRAPHIC NUMBERS (NGNs)
NGNs start with 03, 05, or 08 and act as a gateway to one or more other numbers. When a caller dials such a number, the telephone network 'translates' it into an ordinary geographic or mobile number, sometimes called a 'deliver-to number', in accordance with the rules that the network has been given by the organisation that holds the non-geographic number. The call is then connected to the relevant ordinary number. NGNs are often described as 'number translation services'.

A NGN can enhance the perceived profile and reach of a small or locally-based VCO because it is not using a local number such as 0121 or 020. It also allows the organisation to keep a main telephone number if it moves premises within the UK.

A NGN can be set up to handle incoming calls in flexible ways, for example allowing calls to be distributed across multiple sites at the same time, or sending calls to different sites at different times under a call routing plan. This can be useful for an organisation of any size whose staff are geographically dispersed. It can facilitate home working and allows for an emergency destination to be set up in the event of an incident at a main site.

In the event that incoming call demand outstrips line capacity, a non-geographic number offers the possibility of sending the excess calls to an overflow site or using the external telephone network to play busy announcements or provide message-leaving facilities.

A NGN usually comes with access to statistics about call traffic, such as how many calls got through or received an engaged tone, what their average duration was and how many different people called the number.

As an alternative to NGNs, some telephone companies are now offering **local presence numbers** which offer all the routing and data benefits but using a standard **geographic number**. This is useful if your organisation wants to 'look local'. There is a cost for receiving calls on these numbers, but the costs to call them are no different from the standard geographic rates charged by the caller's network.

If you have set up a NGN and want your calls to be delivered to a mobile number, this can be more expensive because the connection charges are higher.

However, sending calls to a mobile may not be appropriate in any case (except in emergencies). This is because of the potential for poor sound quality and for reaching someone in circumstances where they may find it difficult to focus on the needs of the caller.

See also 03 numbers, 084 numbers, 0870 numbers and Freephone numbers.

OPEN SOURCE TELEPHONY

Open source software is provided for free and suppliers also provide access to the source code. The software is free to copy and redistribute. Open source products are available that will operate **VoIP** telecommunications systems. Examples of services available at the time of writing include Asterisk, Pingtel and Signate. Whilst this can be a cost-effective solution, expertise is needed for installation, training and maintenance.

OUTSOURCING

If you need to acquire or retain donors, to process donations or to handle a call demand that you are unlikely to be able to meet internally, you may save money by hiring an external organisation who can perform this task with greater economies of scale that you can achieve yourself. However, you will need to factor in the time required for choosing and working with an outsourcer so that their staff are effective and appropriately-resourced ambassadors for your own organisation.

PAYPHONES

Payphones can be useful if you need to make a call but have no **mobile phone**, or the one you have is out of battery or credit or where there is no signal. BT payphones do not charge to make calls to a **freephone number**, but at the time of writing, BT charge a minimum of 40p to make a call to other numbers, and charges can be particularly high for calls to 0844, 0845, **0870** and **118** numbers. All public payphones must display the minimum connection charge and must allow free calls to the emergency 999/112 service.

If a VCO operates a **freephone number** which is not provided by BT, the VCO may be charged an additional 10p per minute to receive calls made to that number from a BT payphone. This is called the Payphone Access Charge. The charge is intended to provide a contribution to the costs of maintaining the payphone network but can be a surprise item on a VCO bill. The THA has worked with BT to reduce the burden of this charge on certain charity helplines that have been affected by it.

PBX (PUBLIC BRANCH EXCHANGE) – see Switchboard

PDA (PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT) – see Smartphone

PERSONAL NUMBERS

Also called 'Follow-me' numbers, these numbers start 070 and work in a similar way to **non-geographic numbers** but are linked to an individual, not an organisation. They allow incoming calls to be diverted to a range of different landline or mobile numbers at different times without incurring the usual costs of **call diversion**. Their main benefit is simplicity – people calling you have to remember only one number.

Because they start with 07, the numbers are easily confused with standard mobile numbers, and they can be as expensive for the caller – up to 16p per minute from a BT residential landline. Ofcom has announced an end to personal numbering in the 070 range by mid-2009 and has earmarked the 06 range for them in the longer term.

PORTS – see Voicemail

PREMIUM-RATE SERVICES

Services on numbers starting 0871 and 09, **directory enquiry services** on numbers starting 118 and 0800 REVERSE services are all described as premium rate services and are regulated on a day-to-day basis by an agency called PhonepayPlus (formerly ICSTIS) on behalf of Ofcom. If you have questions or complaints about premium rate services, contact **http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/**.

PSTN

This is the Public Switched Telephone Network, the traditional landline network in the UK.

QUEUEING SYSTEM

An alternative to getting an engaged tone, a queueing system can be useful for your callers when many of your calls cannot be answered straight away. It is normally a function in your **switchboard**.

If you have four staffed incoming lines, you will need to install two or three additional lines to allow people to queue at the same time. However, if you have too many lines, it can be annoying for callers. You are allowing them to wait for longer, and to pay more for the call, when they could have heard an engaged tone. It can also be more expensive for you. More lines means higher line rental. If you operate a **non-geographic number**, then you are probably paying for each minute that callers spend in the queue.

Some systems have automated messages that tell callers what their position is in the queue and give an estimated waiting time. If you have these facilities, it can be useful to give the caller both pieces of information, since a caller who has to wait six minutes could be first in the queue, whereas another one may be sixth in the queue but is likely to answered in one minute.

There are several options for what callers can hear as they queue. Callers can also be very sensitive to verbal announcements. If someone has waited a long time in a queue, telling them that their call is important may be counter-productive if their experience leads them to have the opposite perception. If your caller is ringing you because they couldn't find the answer to their question on your website, or if they don't have access to the internet, promoting your website prominently in your message may exasperate them. No sound at all, on the other hand, makes it difficult for the caller to know whether or not they have been cut off. **Hold music** may not always be to the caller's taste but at least lets them know they remain in the system.

Larger, busier VCOs may benefit from a 'queue buster' system which offers to collect the caller's details and ring them back when someone is available to take their call. This is much more convenient for those callers who will be available at the likely time of the return call.

See also IVR.

RECORDING – see Call recording and listening-in

RECYCLING

The advent of **VoIP**-based systems has led to an increase in the number of old telephone systems which need to be disposed of. Dumping them in a skip is illegal and can cause pollution. There are, however, a number of specialist agencies such as Telecom Green (**http://www.telecomgreen.co.uk**) that can remove and dispose of your old equipment and recycle any usable parts.

Most **mobile phone** networks have recycling initiatives, in addition to the work of independent organisations such as Action Aid Recycling (**http://www.actionaidrecycling.org.uk/**) and Fonebak (**http://www.fonebak.com/**).

REDIRECTION MESSAGES

If you change a much-used number such as a main **switchboard** number, for example if you move premises, it is usually better to put a redirection message on that number so that callers are educated to use the new number, than to divert calls to a new number (in which case they will continue to use the old number). If the redirection message is played from your own equipment, then you will need to continue to rent the line for the old number, whereas if it is in the telephone network, you can cancel the line but pay a small charge for the message.

RELAY SERVICE – see Typetalk

REVENUE SHARE

This term has been used to describe a method of charging people to call you and making money from their calls. It has been primarily associated with the 0870 **non-geographic number** range, to which calls cost up to 8p per minute from BT landlines, with the telephone companies and receiving organisation sharing the income. Because of the high cost of these calls compared with calls to **geographic numbers**, revenue share has gained a poor public reputation, particularly where callers have waited a long time in queues before getting through to a person. Ofcom is ending revenue share on **0870** numbers during 2008. However, the more modest charging (and revenue sharing) opportunities

from the 0844 number range may be attractive to charities. If a VCO's publicity makes it clear, callers may be more willing to 'give as they talk' to a charity than to 'pay as they talk' to other organisations, particularly if it is made clear to them that they are calling a charity and that part of their payment will go to support that charity.

SALES CALLS – see Telephone Preference Service

SATELLITE PHONE – see Walkie-talkies

SIM (SUBSCRIBER IDENTITY MODULE) CARD

A SIM card is a small device in a **mobile phone** that stores information about the subscriber and the telephone number that they have been allocated. It can be removed from one **mobile phone** handset and inserted in another, allowing a user to continue to subscribe to the same network as before on the same number and tariff, but using a different handset.

Traditionally, most **mobile phone** users who have a monthly tariff payment have upgraded their phones regularly when renewing or changing their tariff arrangements, and the cost of the new equipment has been absorbed in these payments. In 2007, however, some mobile networks recognised that not everybody wants or needs the latest phone, so introduced 'SIM-only' offers on personal or business deals, where the user receives a low rate because they are simply purchasing a SIM card to use in their existing phone, rather than a new phone.

Before you can use a SIM card in a phone, particularly if you want to use a different network, it may need to be 'unlocked'. This can be done, at a cost, by the network or at a **mobile phone** shop.

SIP

SIP stands for Session Initiation Protocol and is the most commonly used standard for handling voice signals over internet connections (**VoIP**). Some **VoIP** phones are referred to as SIP phones.

SMARTPHONES

There is no industry definition of a smartphone, but the term normally refers to a **mobile phone** with advanced capabilities such as a full keyboard, the facility to send and receive email and internet access. They can be very useful for VCO staff who are on the move a lot but need to keep in touch with email, since they are smaller than laptop computers but allow for fuller written communication than the SMS services used by standard **mobile phones**. They can save time and fuel by, for example, preventing a trip back to the office to follow up after a meeting.

Costs vary depending on whether the device is bought as a stand-alone or as part of a contract with a mobile network. They also vary according to the amount of data which is sent or used.

Where smartphones can connect to the internet, it is now possible to use them to make **VoIP** calls if the device has been set up correctly and equipped with suitable software.

SPEAKERPHONES

The speakerphone facility operates on many standard fixed and mobile handsets and allows the person taking the call to move away from the receiver or speaker whilst taking the call. There are also dedicated speakerphones, sometimes called 'conference phones', which use powerful microphones so that several people in one location, for example around a table, can talk to one or more people in another. These facilities are very useful if you want two or more people at your end of the line to listen in to or take part in a call. However, the quality of the sound of your and their voices to the person at the other end can sometimes be much worse than when this facility is turned off. It is therefore worth testing this equipment, and/or checking reviews before you buy.

SPEECH-TO-TEXT AND TEXT-TO-SPEECH

The most common application of text-to-speech is when you send a text message from a **mobile phone** to a BT landline, and the landline user receives a spoken version of your message.

There are also applications that convert speech into text. Services such as Spinvox can now convert **voicemail** messages left on a phone and send them as an email or text message. This is particularly helpful if you have staff who are out and about and carry a **smartphone** as they can now retrieve

messages more discreetly or in noisy environments and do not have to struggle to listen to messages several times when reception is poor. The cost per converted message, however, can be as high as 30p. These facilities can also be useful for people who have visual or hearing impairments.

SWITCHBOARD

Sometimes called PBX or 'switch', the switchboard usually refers to the physical 'box' that contains the hardware controlling the operation of phones in an office or organisation and linking these phones to the **PSTN**. The switchboard has historically been a separate item (that sometimes required its own power supply). However, the latest switchboards now have facilities to link with computer networks (see **Computer-telephony Integration**) or the internet (these are called 'hybrid' **VoIP** systems). Many switchboard facilities, such as routing, diversion, recording and **voicemail**, can now be provided by the external telephone network (particularly in the case of **non-geographic numbers**) or by a remote **VoIP** system. This means that no special hardware is required at a VCO site, and that systems are continuously updated by the supplier rather than becoming obsolete like switchboard equipment. The increased use of phone systems that are completely integrated into computer systems means that the traditional switchboard is no longer the centre of the telephone system that it once was. That said, the technology it uses is well-proven and reliable.

TELECONFERENCING

Teleconferencing can be used to save on travel costs, time and fuel.

Conference calls between small numbers of people can be initiated by most modern telephones on most landline and mobile networks. There are normally no set-up costs. Any touch-tone phone with a 'recall' button can start a simple three-way conference on a landline, although further facilities may vary depending on your network and tariff. The costs of the actual call is usually no more than the cost of the total duration for each of the parties added together. Conferencing facilities are also available between users of the same **VoIP** system.

Some telephone companies provide facilities so that each member of a conference can dial in separately to a 'hosted' session which normally uses a **non-geographic number**. Community Network (**http://www.community-network.org/**) offers specialised services for VCOs. Larger groups are served by facilities such as BT Meet Me.

See also Interpreting.

TELEPHONE PREFERENCE SERVICE (TPS)

The Telephone Preference Service (TPS) is the central 'opt-out' register on which individuals can record their preference not to receive unsolicited sales telephone calls to their home or mobile telephone numbers. Corporate TPS is the equivalent list for bodies such as companies (including companies limited by guarantee) and public sector organisations. You need to register each individual number on which you do not wish to receive unsolicited calls. This may be a lengthy process if your organisation uses a range of **DDI** numbers.

It is also a legal requirement that all organisations (including VCOs) do not make such calls to numbers registered on the TPS unless they have the consent of the person being called to do so (eg for existing donors who have given you permission to contact them). If you fundraise by telephone, you will need to have systems to screen the lists of numbers called against the current list of numbers registered with TPS (or you can use an **indirect access** provider that has this built in to their service). You should also respect the wishes of people who are not registered with TPS but have asked you not to call them.

For more information, or to register, go to **http://www.tpsonline.org.uk**. To check if individual numbers are registered with TPS, you can consult websites like **http://www.tpscheck.co.uk/**.

TPS does not cover unsolicited recorded messages. If you have received one of these, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at **http://www.ico.gov.uk/**.

TEXTPHONE

A textphone is a device which connects to an ordinary telephone line and allows someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or has a speech impairment,

to exchange messages with someone else. Where a textphone user is calling a textphone service, the 'conversation' takes place by two-way typing. A textphone costs between £100 and £200 and usually requires a separate line and telephone number. For those VCOs with several departments or staff, software products such as TexBox are available which allow textphone calls to be handled more flexibly through an existing computer network.

Textphone communication is more 'instant' than instant messaging over the internet because the recipient can see what is being typed as it is being typed, and can also see things being changed and deleted. If a VCO has a textphone, it allows the user to talk directly to the VCO without the help of a relay service such as **Typetalk**.

Usage of textphones has declined as deaf people make use of more mainstream methods such as email and text messaging. Other methods include the Geemarc Screenphone (which allows users to talk by voice but receive a response by text) and RNID's Talk by Text (an alternative to instant messaging that displays the characters typed by the sender immediately to the recipient). There is also a 'captioned telephony' system called Teletec CapTel which allows the voice and a transcription of the words (performed by a communications assistant) to be sent down a single telephone line, although this is no longer available to new customers and Ofcom is currently exploring options for the future availability of this type of service. For organisations with videoconferencing equipment, it is also possible to access interpreting services by video in British Sign Language.

TRUNK – see Line

TWO-WAY RADIO – see Walkie-talkie

TYPETALK

Typetalk is a relay service (also known as a 'voice carry over' service) which is used to help people with hearing or speech impairments to communicate over the telephone. The user of the service will use their **textphone** to make a call to Typetalk. The Typetalk operator will call the VCO, tell the VCO what the user is typing and then type back the VCO's response. Typetalk is operated by the RNID. For more information, go to **http://www.rnid-typetalk.org.uk/.**

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS/MESSAGING

– see Voicemail and VoIP.

UNINTERRUPTIBLE POWER SUPPLY (UPS)

A UPS unit protects electrical equipment from power surges or 'spikes' and can allow it to operate for a short time in the event of a power failure. It can be connected to a **switchboard** or computer server and fitted with battery packs to extend the period for which your equipment can operate without mains power. The investment (a few hundred pounds, depending on the type of equipment it is connected to) is particularly worthwhile for a VCO with a 24-hour operation from a single site. Connecting a UPS to a **switchboard** will disrupt service, so it is worth installing the unit at the same time as a **switchboard** or server is installed.

VIRTUAL CALL CENTRE OR VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK

– see Automatic Call Distribution.

VOICEMAIL

Voicemail facilities allow users of the service to leave voice messages under certain circumstances. At the most basic level, they can be provided by an answerphone. This can be programmed to activate automatically if a telephone is not picked up within a certain number of rings, or to give you, in effect, a second line if you are busy. A voicemail greeting can be altered to reflect changing circumstances, from 'I'm busy, please leave a message and I'll call you back' to 'Please try my mobile/another number' or 'I'm on leave until 7 February, so contact [name and number] in my absence or leave a message, or drop an email to [address]'. Messages can be stored in a physical **switchboard** or in the telephone network.

A dedicated mailbox can be used to store information which can be processed in batches. For example, if you would like to recruit volunteers, you can set a system which routes their calls to a

mailbox and encourages them to leave their name and address so that you can send them a pack. This can be very helpful if you expect a lot of calls in a short time and if your voicemail allows several people to leave messages at the same time (see below). If you use a mailbox in this way, make clear to those leaving messages that difficult or unusual words should be spelt out in full.

If messages are stored in an external telephone network, such as with **mobile phones**, the user may be charged by time for retrieving them. If a staff member expects to generate a lot of long messages, this can make a significant contribution to their total bill.

On traditional **switchboards**, the number of people who can be using voicemail facilities (which may include messages in your **queueing** system) at the same time is measured in 'ports', so you may have, for example, a 4-port or an 8-port voicemail. You will need to decide how many ports will be realistic for your organisation, bearing in mind that each port being used will also take up one of your **lines**.

On certain **VoIP** systems, voicemail messages can be included alongside emails in an 'inbox'. This is called 'unified messaging'.

VOICE CARRY-OVER – see Typetalk

VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VoIP)

The term VoIP is now used to describe a range of options for making and receiving telephone calls over the internet rather than the traditional telephone network. These options include:

- Handsets that you connect to an adapter which plugs into a **broadband** modem or router and allows you to make and receive calls just like an ordinary phone. With some devices, you do not need to have the computer switched on to use the service.
- Proprietary messaging services such as such as Skype or Microsoft Live Messenger which do not use traditional phone numbers but allow users to talk to each other for free using the internet. In most cases, users have a pair of headphones and a microphone plugged into a computer, but some mobile devices now offer access to these services. In the case of Skype, it is possible to make calls to external numbers but this does incur a cost.
- Devices like a Tesco Stickphone that plug into a USB port and contain software that can be used to make calls using an attached **headset**. This means you can use the service from any computer.
- Bespoke systems which are built into the internet facilities within an organisation and within and across its sites. These normally use standard telephone numbers and work with headphones and either physical handsets or on-screen displays.

The main benefit of VoIP systems is that they are less expensive in a number of ways:

- Using a basic VoIP phone package such as Vonage means that, once you have paid a monthly rental, calls to UK landlines, and to some international numbers, are free or very low cost compared with traditional providers.
- For VCOs that work across several centres, cities, countries or continents, users of the same VoIP system can talk to or **teleconference** with each other for free, eliminating the cost of calls within the organisation.
- As the telephone system is part of your computer network, it doesn't need its own separate arrangements for cabling or maintenance. For this reason, many organisations choose to set up a VoIP system when they move to new-build premises. However, if you are 'migrating' from a traditional **switchboard** to VoIP, you are likely to need a managed process which incorporates a period during which the VoIP system is linked up to your existing system.
- VoIP can incorporate video, which means that videoconferencing is cheaper than ever before.
- Calls to VoIP services such as Skype can now be made from and received by certain handsets on some mobile networks, and some **smartphones** are now available with VoIP facilities as part of their internet access. This may make calls cheaper than over the standard **GSM** network.

VoIP systems also have some other benefits:

- Groups of people using VoIP across different sites have the advantage of being able to see who is

available, who is busy on a call, who is away temporarily and who is logged off completely. This ability to monitor the presence of staff across sites is not normally possible with other systems.
- VoIP systems can provide detailed real-time information about call activity and call cost if applicable.
- Staff can receive calls on the same ordinary **geographic number** wherever they are. As long as you have access to a **headset** and the appropriate computer software, external callers can then reach your number as you go from site to site, to a home or mobile location, or to a location outside the UK. As the number is a standard **geographic number**, it is usually cheaper to call than a mobile number.
- Linking the telephone traffic into a computer system means that it is possible to record calls, receive **voicemail** messages alongside emails in an 'inbox' and obtain real-time and historical statistics on numbers, durations and other information about incoming and outgoing calls.

Disadvantages of VoIP systems include:
- Variable sound quality. Whereas capacity on a traditional **switchboard** is determined by the number of **lines**, and sound quality is less variable, voice traffic competes with data traffic on a VoIP system, so organisations using VoIP need to have sufficient capacity or 'bandwidth' in their **broadband** connection for both types of traffic, otherwise parts of the conversation will be lost or the sound quality will suffer. For this reason, VCOs should check with potential suppliers in case their projected phone use means that a faster or a separate broadband connection, or one that prioritises voice traffic, is required.
- Their dependency on an internet connection being available and reliable. Furthermore, not all systems and devices are able to make emergency 999 or 112 calls (although this will be mandatory from 8 September 2008 for VoIP services that allow users to make calls to normal phone numbers). It is therefore advisable to retain or install a **PSTN** line or ensure you have mobile facilities as a backup.
- Susceptibility to the same security issues that affect other internet activity. There have been some industry scares about VoIP phones being susceptible to eavesdropping by hackers. If you are commissioning a VoIP system, it is worth ensuring that you subscribe to a service that updates your software to take account of known security risks.

Internet protocol technology is the basis of BT's new network which is being introduced between 2006 and 2011 to replace its existing telephone, **broadband** and **ISDN** networks. Users of these networks will not notice any significant differences except minor disruption when the switchover occurs in their area. Mobile networks will not be affected. For more information, go to **http://www.switchedonuk.org/**.

For more on **VoIP** generally, consult **http://www.voip.org.uk**

WALKIE-TALKIES

If your VCO is involved in a festival, sponsored walk, march, conference, concert, sporting event, or other outdoor situation where several staff are moving around a lot within a relatively small area but need to communicate with each other, it can be cheaper to hire (or, if they need them regularly, to buy) a set of walkie-talkies than to pay for mobile calls. This is because there are no ongoing call costs once you have purchased the equipment. A walkie-talkie has the added benefits of:
- Being able to broadcast to several listeners (eg 'Has anyone seen the box with the green leaflets in?').
- Good reception in open country where mobile signals may be weak or non-existent.

If you use short-range walkie-talkies that operate with the European Union PMR446 standard, you do not require a licence. Users should check, however, that the range and battery life of the particular devices they choose are sufficient for their needs. For regular activities in remote locations without a mobile signal, a more expensive option, but one which gives you access to emergency services, is a satellite phone from a supplier such as Satphone (**http://www.satphone.co.uk**).

WIRELESS SYSTEMS – see **Bluetooth**, DECT and Headsets

WITHHOLDING YOUR NUMBER

If the nature of your outgoing calls is sensitive, for example if you contact victims of domestic violence, you can make arrangements to withhold your number. This means that it will not be available to the users of the equipment that you call if they have a **caller display** or **call return service** (see **Calling Line Identification**). If, however, this is set up as a permanent feature in your **switchboard** or from your telephone company, it can prevent you from contacting those people who have chosen to not to accept calls from withheld numbers. If you take a call from someone that you will need to call back, it is therefore helpful to check that they will be able to receive the call. Users of BT lines can get around this on a number-by-number basis by using 1470 as a prefix before dialling the number they want, but this may not work from certain **switchboards**.

5

Sources of support

5

Sources of support

Circuit riders

http://icthub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/Circuit_Riders.html

The THA has identified the following circuit riders as having skills and interests in telephony:

David Florence (covers Wakefield) david.florence@vawd.org.uk

Paul Ruskin (covers Norwich) paulruskin@afl.org.uk

Matt Ramsay (covers Hereford and Worcester) mattr@comfirst.org.uk

Phil Thompson (covers Peterborough) phil@yarwell.demon.co.uk

IT volunteers

http://icthub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/Volunteering_03.html

From its review of profiles of IT volunteers, IT4Communities has estimated that around 40 of its 4,000 volunteers have skills and interests in telephony.

Funders of ICT

ICT Hub Sources of Funding report
http://icthub.org.uk/research

Details of charity-friendly telecoms suppliers

ICT Hub suppliers directory
http://directory.icthub.org.uk/list.html?act=comcon&index=3

Telephone Helplines Association

The lead provider of advice, consultancy and training for the provision of quality helpline services in the voluntary and statutory sectors.

http://www.helplines.org.uk

Tel: 0845 120 3767

Ofcom

The independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries.

http://www.ofcom.org.uk

Tel: 0300 123 3000

PhonepayPlus

The day-to-day regulator for premium rate services.

http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/

Tel: 0800 500 212

Office of the Telecommunication Ombudsman

An Ombudsman service for public communication providers and their customers.

http://www.otelo.org.uk

Tel: 0845 050 1614

Consumer advice

A service designed to help fixed line telecoms customers to make informed decisions on which supplier to use.

http://www.topcomm.org.uk

Advice on telephony for deaf and hard of hearing people

RNID

http://www.rnid.org.uk/

Tel: 0808 808 0123

Designing IVR and menu systems

Employers Forum on Disability Tel: 020 7403 3020

http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/guests/publications/downloads/barrier-free-call-routing.pdf