

PRESS RELEASE



the premium rate services regulator

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ICSTIS: “VIEWERS MUST GET A FAIR DEAL”

ICSTIS, the premium rate services regulator, is to hold an urgent meeting next week with leading broadcasters, programme makers and premium rate service providers in the wake of the recent allegations made against Channel 4’s *Richard & Judy* show and the BBC’s *Saturday Kitchen* programme to agree what practical steps can be taken to restore consumer trust in the sector.

Speaking on Radio 4 today, ICSTIS Chairman Sir Alistair Graham said: “Viewers must get a fair deal. The allegations that have been made over the last 10 days are serious and highlight issues that need addressing as a matter of urgency. Our job is to act where harm is identified – that is what we are doing and we will take whatever action we think is necessary once our investigations have been concluded. If what has been alleged is found to be true, our message to the industry is simple – this type of practice is not acceptable. Viewers deserve better.

“However, responding to problems after the event is not enough. One of our main priorities at ICSTIS is preventing harm. We believe there is a need for action to ensure that viewers can take part in TV shows with confidence. The industry has a major responsibility in this area. Broadcasters and others should be looking as a matter of urgency at how the recent problems came about and at what needs to be done to prevent them happening again.

“I have therefore written an open letter to Chairmen and Chief Executives across the sector today informing them of the urgent need to work together to tackle the problems that have been highlighted over the last few days. Our meeting next week is an opportunity to kickstart this process.”

For details of Sir Alistair's letter, please visit:

http://www.icstis.org.uk/pdfs_news/prsTV_SAGletter.pdf

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A photograph of Sir Alistair Graham can be accessed at:

<http://www.icstis.org.uk/images/SirAlistairGraham.jpg>

NOTES

- ICSTIS is the industry-funded regulatory body for all premium rate charged telecommunications services. Further details of its work can be found at www.icstis.org.uk.
- ICSTIS regulates the content, promotion and overall operation of services through its Code of Practice. It investigates complaints, and has the power to fine companies and bar access to services if the Code is breached. It can also bar the individual(s) behind a company from running any other premium rate services under any company name on any telephone network for a defined period.
- Services are advertised on either 09 dialling codes or, in the case of mobile services, on four or five digit short codes followed by a descriptive key word (for example, 87654 ICSTIS). In some instances, such as interactive TV where viewers make 'calls' using their remote controls, the premium rate number may not be shown. In addition, ICSTIS regulates all '118' directory enquiry services.
- Services offer information and entertainment via phone, fax, PC (e-mail, Internet, bulletin board), mobile (SMS/MMS/WAP) or interactive digital TV, and currently vary in cost from 10 pence per call to £1.50 per minute. The money paid by users for services is shared between the telephone company carrying the service and the organisation providing the content. Approximately 45,000 services are in operation at any one time, generating revenue of approximately £1.2 billion in 2006.