

MEDIA RELEASE...MEDIA RELEASE...MEDIA RELEASE...

PHONEPAYPLUS LAUNCHES TEXT MESSAGE-BASED NUMBER-CHECKING SERVICE

PhonepayPlus, the phone-paid services regulator (formerly ICSTIS), today launched SMSus – a new text message service that provides information on premium rate numbers and shortcodes anytime, anywhere, direct to mobile phones. The service is designed to provide users with the necessary information to allow them to make educated choices, and to provide peace of mind for consumers looking to take advantage of the many fun, informative phone-paid services on offer.

More and more people are using mobile phones, the internet and landlines to pay for a range of products and services such as ringtones, news alerts, TV phone-ins and interactive competitions. It is important they have access to the information they need before making a payment. For the first time, consumers will be able to text a premium-rate number or shortcode to PhonepayPlus which will quickly reply with all the relevant information on the service.

PhonepayPlus already provides a number-checking facility on its website – www.phonepayplus.org.uk – which is used more than 100,000 times each month. It hopes the new text message service will make it even easier for the millions of consumers that regularly enjoy phone-paid services to get information on a service before they sign up, or when they are checking charges on a bill.

To use the service, mobile phone users simply text the number in question to 76787 (or S-M-S-u-s on their mobile phone keypad). PhonepayPlus will then reply with information on the service provider, the cost of the service and how to find out more – or, if necessary, make a complaint about the service.

The SMSus service is charged at the standard network rate, and the texts they receive from the regulator will be free. This means most customers will not have to pay for the service as it is likely to be included in their monthly bundle of free text messages.

Trays O'Reilly, Director of Standards and Communications at PhonepayPlus, said: "Our web-based number-checking service is already extremely popular, as it gives people the peace of mind to check out a service before signing up to it, or provides clarity when checking a bill. We hope that by extending our number checker to mobile phones many more people will be able to take advantage

of this useful tool."

PhonepayPlus, which is charged with protecting consumers from possible abuse in the phone-paid industry, will monitor numbers submitted by users and, where appropriate, investigate service providers. Those providers found in breach of PhonepayPlus' Code of Practice can be fined, or even shut down.

O'Reilly continued: "The phone-paid industry is used and enjoyed by millions of people. At PhonepayPlus our aim is to build consumer trust in the phone-paid industry. We're confident SMSus helps us do just that."

In addition to number-checking via phone or internet, PhonepayPlus has a number of other services, including PHONEbrain, an online guide to helping children stay in control of their money when using ringtones, downloads and other services.

For further information, visit www.phonepayplus.org.uk / www.phonebrain.org.uk

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For further information, please contact:

PhonepayPlus press office on (020) 7940 7415 or (020) 7940 7447.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About PhonepayPlus

PhonepayPlus is the organisation (previously known as ICSTIS) that regulates phone-paid services – the goods and services that you can buy by charging the cost to your phone bills and mobile pre-pay accounts. Further details of its work can be found at www.phonepayplus.org.uk.

About SMSus

When using SMSus, the following process applies:

1. Select a premium rate number you would like to check (for example, an unspecified number on your phone bill, or a number featured on an advertisement).
2. Open a new text message on your mobile phone, type the number in question into the body of the message and send the text message to 76787 (S-M-S-u-s on your mobile phone keypad).
3. You will receive an automatic reply outlining the cost of the number, details of the service provider, how to contact them and how to complain (if necessary).
4. Should you need further information about the service, please contact the service provider directly on the number provided.
5. Should you need to complain about the service, please contact PhonepayPlus by visiting www.phonepayplus.org.uk, or calling 0800 500 212.
6. Should information about the premium rate number not be available, you will receive a text message suggesting you contact PhonepayPlus.

