



## **Code of Practice for Service Delivery of common mobile short-codes in the UK**

### **Overview**

- Mobile Network Operators currently provide a range of services behind short codes for their own and Service Provider services. There is demand from Service Providers for a straight-forward method of providing short-codes, notably for Premium-SMS, on a common basis across multiple mobile networks. This code of practice for service delivery introduces this method and is supported by 3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone.
- Mobile Network Operators have agreed a common structure and approach for short code provision and management. This will assist Service Providers to secure a short code which will operate across multiple mobile networks, will facilitate customer recognition of new services and will support development and marketing of these services. The Code provides for a pricing framework which will contribute to consumer protection from unexpectedly high service charges and inappropriate or unexpected service content.
- Mobile Network Operators agree to negotiate with Service Providers to provide common short codes capable of use across all UK mobile networks. Where a code is subject to this scheme participating operators agree that it shall only be used by the party to which it has been provided under the rules of the scheme. The only exception shall be codes in use at the time of formal scheme commencement which shall be subject to transition provisions.
- The provision of short code access on an individual mobile network is subject to the conclusion of a satisfactory bilateral service agreement between the Service Provider and individual Mobile Network Operator in question. No aspect of commercial service delivery is subject to this code of practice and individual Mobile Network Operators are not obliged to enter into a commercial agreement with a Service Provider provided with a short code under this code of practice.
- Premium Rate Service Providers are required to comply with ICSTIS' Code of Practice, the requirements of the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation. Failure to ensure compliance in the case of services behind short codes may result in revenues being withheld or services being suspended.
- The Code of Practice is a live document which will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the marketplace.

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## Part 1 - Scheme description

### 1.1 Which codes?

The following were considered when identifying potential short code ranges:

- short codes starting with '0' risk confusion with national and international dialling codes;
- codes starting with '1' are managed directly by Oftel<sup>1</sup> and their utilisation is high;
- short codes currently in use for SMS services, including a small number of cross-network codes, tend to start with an '8';
- short codes starting with a '9' could potentially be used, although there is a need to avoid confusion with '999' emergency service type calls.

Hence short codes in the '2-8' ranges are, in principle, viewed as the most suitable for cross network offerings. Mobile Network Operators use short codes in these ranges for both their own services and for Service Provider services and any code of practice must provide for scope for competitive differentiation between Mobile Network Operators, as well as Service Provider access.

On this basis short codes in the range '5-8' have been agreed by mobile network participants to be within the initial scope of this code of practice. In contrast short codes in the range '2-4' will formally be outwith the present scheme although these codes remain available for Service Provider use subject to reaching agreement with individual mobile operators.

### 1.2 How many codes and of what length?

Participating Mobile Network Operators have agreed that any common cross-network scheme should use a common code length. Short codes in use in UK networks range from 3 digit to 6 digit. As codes are designed to provide quick, direct and easy way to reach services they have been made as short as possible. However, new allocations by Oftel have tended to increase in length with time. This is because there is a tension between shorter codes, which may be more memorable but use up orders of magnitude more code space, and longer codes which do not offer as keen an advantage of easy recall and dialling. From a commercial perspective, code length should be short, but the scheme capacity must be sufficient to ensure that demand for short codes is met over the coming years without necessitating a change in code length.

Given these considerations, participating operators believe that short codes subject to a common approach should be 5 digits long. Hence common space will be from **50000** to **89999**. This will provide for 40,000 codes in total. However, no more than a proportion of this space should be opened initially to encourage efficient numbering practices and to allow room for subsequent short code expansion in contiguous ranges and other scheme development.

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<sup>1</sup> Three categories of Oftel-regulated short codes exist behind 1: Type A codes for defined services across all operators (e.g. 100 for operator access); Type B for indirect access & Type C for operator own use. Short codes behind 2-8 are Type C.

### 1.3 What structure will be used?

Participating Mobile Network Operators believe that a coherent structure is required for common short code access. In principle, this must reflect established concerns of regulators and consumer stakeholders for service and tariff information to be communicated via codes and to provide, at least the level of information which exists in the national numbering scheme. At the same time the approach must not be so rigid that additional code space is consumed when Service Providers wish to change price points.

Two short code ranges will be provided initially for common use. This will offer 20,000 codes. The scheme should reflect current practice in the designation of premium rate services. In particular:

- **60XXX - 68XXX** codes will be opened for services which are up to £1 per fixed fee SMS/call or for time charged services up to and including 60ppm not greater than £5. This follows the UK Numbering Convention approach to 0900/1 premium rate space.
- **80XXX - 88XXX** codes will be opened for services which are open-ended fixed fee SMS/call or open-ended time dependent services. This follows the UK Numbering Convention approach to 0905/6 premium rate space.
- In addition there is a need to identify short code ranges for adult services including Sexual Entertainment Services and other adult content analogous to the established premium service range of 0909. Participating operators believe that short codes behind **69XXX** and **89XXX** should be made available for these services.

5XXXX and 7XXXX will be reserved by participating operators for future short code expansion and no new short code services will be launched in this space unless a change from reserved status is agreed by participating operators. Hence the scheme will have the following general structure:

Short code	Designation
50000 – 59999	Reserved
60000 – 68999	Up to £1 including VAT per fixed fee SMS/call or for time charged services up to and including 60ppm not greater than £5 including VAT
69000 – 69999	Open-ended fixed fee SMS/call or open-ended time dependent adult content services
70000 – 79999	Reserved
80000 – 88999	Open-ended fixed fee SMS/call or open-ended time dependent services
89000 – 89999	Open-ended fixed fee SMS/call or open-ended time dependent adult content services

#### *1.4 Provision of new codes within the scheme*

Participating operators will only issue new short codes beginning with the digits “5”, “6”, “7” or “8” in accordance with this Code of Practice. Hence, all new codes issued by participating operators in these ranges will be 5 digits long. These provisions do not affect codes that have been provided before any individual operator has agreed to observe this Code of Practice (see Part 4, Transition Arrangements).

## Part 2 - Scheme administration

### 2.1 Who will manage the scheme?

Mobile Network Operators will manage the scheme following the existing model of mobile number portability. There will be a Short Code Management Group (SCMG) which will consist of a representative of each participating Mobile Network Operator. In addition, Oftel's Numbering Unit will be invited to participate in the work of the SCMG on an *ex officio* basis.

The role of the SCMG will be to agree policy with respect to the use of common short codes on participating mobile networks. This document forms the initial basis of operation of the SCMG which will agree formal allocation rules and approaches for the provision of short codes. These rules may be revised periodically and any revision will be published for the purposes of transparency. An initial review is envisaged after six months of scheme operation. The SCMG will meet at a frequency to be decided and will publish minutes of its activities. Minutes and any other policy documentation will be available to Service Providers on request. Changes to the Code of Practice will be agreed by the Short Code Management Group on a unanimous basis. In the event that there is not unanimity a dissenting operator must make its dissent known formally to other SCMG members.

The Mobile Data Association (MDA) has offered to host details of the Code of Practice on the trade section of its web site and this will be used to provide other information regarding the scheme including details of code availability. The MDA will publicise the scheme and support the work of the SCMG.

### 2.2 How will the scheme be administered?

A number of potential methods exist to provide short codes through this scheme. In particular, a Central Reservation Service (CRS) model - following the approach of the Oftel Numbering Unit - could be used as an administrative mechanism. Alternatively, participating operators could divide responsibility for administering the scheme, either in time<sup>2</sup> or by each taking a lead administrative role for part of the code range. Currently short codes are administered directly as part of individual commercial discussions.

The use of a CRS would follow existing formal regulatory approaches, and would provide for a single point of contact. However, it would have greater time to establish, with cost and complexity implications of using an external provider. Division of administrative responsibility between participating operators would internalise costs and increase the number of administrative contact points, either over time or at one time.

Operators also anticipate that the workload required by the scheme will be "*front-loaded*": demand will be high initially as codes are launched, but reduce subsequently. This would suggest that dividing responsibility for the scheme over time would be inappropriate in terms of loading effort on each participant.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Mobile Numbering Portability Focus Group is chaired on a six monthly rotating basis by participating mobile operators and a similar approach could be taken to administering the short code scheme.

In summary:

Administrative approach	+ ve	- ve
CRS	Single contact point.	Cost and complexity.
Time-divided responsibility	Single contact point at one time. Low cost.	Not ideal for "front-loaded" demand.
Range-divided responsibility	Current commercial approach. Low cost.	Operator-specific contact.

Based on these various factors participating Mobile Network Operators have opted for a range-divided responsibility for administering the scheme.

### 2.3 How will range-divided responsibility operate?

An initial trial proportion of the agreed available short codes in the range 5XXXX to 8XXXX will be administered by participating Mobile Network Operator who have agreed to act as a "lead operator" for a particular range. Individual lead operators will:

- 1/ have responsibility for the provision of short codes to requesting Service Providers within the short code ranges they administer;
- 2/ issue confirmations of short code provision to Service Providers and periodically notify other participating operators of short codes which have been provided;
- 3/ ensure that there is efficient short code use on the ranges they administer and that all code of practice rules are followed in the provision of short codes and by Service Providers.

At scheme commencement four operators have agreed to act as lead operators. These are: Orange, 02; T-Mobile; and Vodafone.

Lead operators may charge for the provision of a short code under the terms of this code of practice. This charge should be related to the administrative costs of providing a short code.

Each lead operator will have access to 2,400 five digit short codes for provision to Service Providers. At scheme launch four operators will act as lead operators: Orange, 02, T-Mobile and Vodafone. 3 will not act as a lead operator, but will respond to the commercial opportunities which individual Service Providers bring to it under this scheme on a case by case basis.

Based on selection by lot the codes which each operator will administer are shown as follows. Code ranges now available, subject to the conditions of the scheme, are shown in white.

<b>Short code range</b>	<b>Designation / Lead operator</b>
50000 – 59999	Reserved
60000 – 60999	Orange
61000 – 61999	O2
62000 – 62999	3
63000 – 63999	T-Mobile
64000 – 64999	Vodafone
65000 – 68999	Reserved
69000 – 69099	Orange
69100 – 69199	O2
69200 – 69299	3
69300 – 69399	T-Mobile
69400 – 69499	Vodafone
69500 – 69599	Orange
69600 – 69699	O2
69700 – 69799	3
69800 – 69899	T-Mobile
69900 – 69999	Vodafone
70000 – 79999	Reserved
80000 – 80999	Orange
81000 – 81999	O2
82000 – 82999	3
83000 – 83999	T-Mobile
84000 – 84999	Vodafone
85000 – 88999	Reserved
89000 – 89099	Orange
89100 – 89199	O2
89200 – 89299	3
89300 – 89399	T-Mobile
89400 – 89499	Vodafone
89500 – 89599	Orange
89600 – 89699	O2
89700 – 89799	3
89800 – 89899	T-Mobile
89900 – 89999	Vodafone

Additional ranges which are currently reserved will be made available subject to agreement by the SCMG, based on commercial demand and efficiency considerations.

#### 2.4 How will Service Providers secure preferred short codes?

The approaches used by individual participating Mobile Network Operators may vary. However, service providers should be able to secure a preferred short code by:

- 1/ approaching the named lead operator contact with responsibility for administering the relevant short code range containing their preferred code; or
- 2/ approaching the Service Provider's normal commercial contacts in participating Mobile Network Operators who will be able to provide details of available codes and refer requests appropriately.

#### 2.5 Scheme utilisation rules

Scheme utilisation rules will be designed to facilitate the provision of short codes to Service Providers seeking to create new business opportunities and to add value through the active provision of services behind common short codes.

These include requirements that:

- 1/ Codes within the scheme will be described as "*available*", "*reserved*", or "*active*". "*Active*" codes are those which are open and in use. "*Reserved*" codes are those which have been reserved by a Service Provider. "*Available*" codes are those which are available for Service Providers to reserve and to make active.
- 2/ All codes "*reserved*" by a lead operator for a Service Provider shall be opened and made active on at least two participating networks within 3 months of their provision;
- 3/ Information on codes which are open and active will be notified by the Service Provider to the Lead Operator with the names of at least two mobile operators with whom the code is active. The Lead Operator will then notify other mobile operators of the change of code status to "*active*". It shall be open to the SCMG to apply additional rules such as a minimum activity threshold to codes which are designated as "*active*".
- 4/ No more than a total of 5 codes which are not "*active*" on at least two participating networks may be held by any party (including associated companies or individuals) from participating operators at any time.
- 5/ A Service Provider may voluntarily relinquish a code by notification to the relevant Lead Operator that the code is no longer required. The Lead Operator will advise the other mobile operators of the change of status to "*available*".
- 6/ Any codes which are recovered as a result of any forfeiture under the provisions of 2/, 3/ or 4/ above or as a result of cancellation under 5/ above shall be re-designated as "*available*" by the relevant Lead Operator and notified as such to the other MNOs.

## 2.6 Mobile operator commitment to this scheme

Participating mobile operators agree to establish an efficient and timely mechanism of provision of short codes to Service Providers for scheme ranges where they are acting as lead administrator. This will be subject to a formal Service Level Agreement to be established by the SCMG which will be made available to Service Providers

Where a short code has been provided under this scheme participating operators agree that it shall only be used on their network by the party to which it has been provided under the scheme rules. The only exception shall be codes in use at the time of formal scheme commencement which shall be subject to transition provisions.

Mobile Network Operators agree to negotiate with Service Providers who have been provided with a code under this scheme to facilitate common short codes available across all UK mobile networks. However, for the avoidance of doubt, opening a short code on an individual mobile network is subject to the conclusion of a satisfactory bilateral commercial agreement between the Service Provider in question and the individual Mobile Network Operator. Such bilateral arrangements are outside the scope of this scheme.

Individual operators reserve the right to apply commercial conditions subject to normal commercial processes. Under no circumstances will an individual Network Operator be obliged to conclude an agreement with a Service Provider who has been provided with a code under this scheme.

No aspect of commercial service delivery, including the form or nature of commercial agreement between Service Providers and Mobile Network Operators, is subject to this code of practice.

## 2.7 What information will be required by participating Network Operators?

Under the scheme Service Providers will be required to:

- 1/ confirm their identity including contact name, company name, address and telephone contact details;
- 2/ confirm that they will abide by the rules of the scheme as provided to them at the short code request stage, or revised subsequently;
- 3/ list all short codes which are being requested or which have been provided to them under the scheme or for which applications are in process;
- 4/ provide details of a publicly available contact number which a short code can use to contact their customer services; and
- 5/ agree to abide by such other co-regulatory rules which may apply to services provided behind common short codes, including the ICSTIS Code of Practice.

This information will be provided to the relevant lead administrating operator at the time of requesting a short code.

## Part 3 - Regulatory issues

### 3.1 ICSTIS

ICSTIS is the industry funded regulatory body for premium rate services which generally have the following characteristics, they:

- 1/ are charged to a telephone bill;
- 2/ involve revenue share between a network and service provider; and
- 3/ involve some form of content, product or service delivered as part of the call or as a consequence of the call.

ICSTIS has a Code of Practice which is recognised by the Director General of Telecommunications and is backed by a licence condition in Mobile Network Operators licenses. ICSTIS enforces its Code of Practice on service providers and has powers to set sanctions where the Code is breached. Powers of sanction range from warnings to fines and/or to bars upon services for defined periods.

ICSTIS' powers encompass both traditional premium rate services and the fast developing Premium-SMS sector. Participating Mobile Network Operators support this approach and value the protection which this provides to customers. Service Providers will be required to comply with ICSTIS' Code of Practice, the requirements of the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation. Failure to ensure compliance in the case of services behind short codes may result in revenues being withheld or services being suspended.

Typical ICSTIS concerns surrounding premium rate services (both SMS and voice) include: unsolicited and misleading promotions, price transparency, inappropriate promotion to children, unclear instructions on how to unsubscribe from services and a general lack of awareness among consumers of how new services operate.

It is the responsibility of Service Providers who provide services behind short codes within this scheme to ensure compliance with the ICSTIS Code of Practice. Operators may be required by ICSTIS to withhold monies or suspend the service pending the investigation of a complaint by ICSTIS. In the event of any ICSTIS complaint regarding any particular short code Network Operators, including the lead administrative operator, may be required to inform ICSTIS of the identity of the Service Provider.

### 3.2 Oftel

Oftel has welcomed moves by the mobile industry to develop a common co-regulatory approach to short codes consistent with the current UK numbering framework. Oftel has suggested<sup>3</sup> that such an approach for short codes outside 1XXX would be consistent with Oftel's strategy of moving towards co- and self-regulation.

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<sup>3</sup> For example in: Access Codes: options for the future use and proposals to revise access codes and short codes conventions

Participating Network Operators will work closely with Ofcom to ensure that there is effective numbering management of the short code space and that effective consumer protection measures are developed. This will take into account best practice rules and approaches produced by regulatory bodies and other numbering management organisations.

To ensure transparency, any common approach to numbering management and rules will be shared with Ofcom and will be made publicly available to interested Service Providers

## Part 4 - Transition arrangements

Participating operators have in place, a range of services throughout the proposed harmonised short code range and it is accepted that this may reduce the availability of common short codes. However, participating operators believe that short codes in use by an individual operator or Service Provider should not, in general, be disrupted by the launch of this scheme. However, if an individual operator or Service Provider ceases to use a short code this code will be made available for re-use within this scheme.

Where an existing short code is used to offer services other than those meeting the price or service type designations of the scheme e.g. services above £1 including VAT behind a 60XXX to 68XXX code or offering adult content services behind codes other than 69XXX or 89XXX participating operators will provide an additional code to the Service Provider suitable for the services in question.

Participating operators will identify a period of time during which migration of existing services which do not fit the code of practice structure will be required. This period will be identified following consultation with other stakeholders notably service providers, ICSTIS and Oftel.

Prior to scheme commencement participating operators will make available to each other a full list of existing short codes in use within the common scheme range. This information will be used to compile an initial database of scheme availability.

Where common 5-digit short codes exist in the scheme ranges and are active on at least one participating mobile operator network, without conflicts, these codes will be marked within the new scheme as *"active"*.

Where 5-digit short codes exist in the scheme ranges and are in use on more than one operator's network by more than one Service Provider the relevant lead operator will again mark such codes as *"active"*. Service Providers in this position are free to approach the relevant lead operator to jointly propose the resolution of such initial conflicts, however, they are under no obligation to do this. No formal short code provision confirmation will be issued by lead operators where such usage conflicts exist.

Participating Mobile Network Operators will encourage the migration of 4-digit codes to either dedicated operator number ranges or to a common 5-digit short code as appropriate so that common short code space is used effectively.

## **Part 5 - Definitions**

**ICSTIS** - The Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services. ICSTIS is an industry-funded self-regulatory body for the Premium Rate Services industry.

**Lead Operator** - an operator which has agreed to administer a proportion of the short code space within the context of this scheme.

**Mobile Data Association (MDA)** - A body established to reflect the interests of suppliers of new data services on mobiles.

**Mobile Network Operator** - One of 3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile or Vodafone participating in the proposed Code of Practice for Service Delivery of common mobile short-codes in the UK.

**Oftel** - The Office of Telecommunications

**Sexual Entertainment Services** - services of a clearly sexual nature or any services for which the associated promotional material is or implies a clearly sexual nature.

**Service Provider** - an individual organization or company which contracts with a Network Operator for facilities enabling the provision of Premium Rate Services, including premium SMS.

**Premium Rate Services** - services where part of the overall charge paid by the customer for the call or short message service represents payment for the content, other product or service delivered is passed to the Service Provider and is paid through the customer's telephone bill.

## Part 6 - Administration

### 6.1 Contact details for shortcode reservation

Requests for the provision of short codes within this scheme may be made through existing commercial channels. Alternatively, requests for short code provision may be made directly to relevant operators using the following e-mail addresses.

Number Range	Operator	Contact address
60000-60999 69000-69099 69500-69599 80000-80999 89000-89099 89500-89599	Orange	shortcodes@orange.co.uk
61000-61999 69100-69199 69600-69699 81000-81999 89100-89199 89600-89699	O <sub>2</sub>	<a href="mailto:Smsshortcodes@o2.com">Smsshortcodes@o2.com</a>
62000-62999 69200-69299 69700-69799 82000-82999 89200-89299 89700-89799	3	<a href="mailto:shortcodes@three.co.uk">shortcodes@three.co.uk</a>
63000-63999 69300-69399 69800-69899 83000-83999 89300-89399 89800-89899	T-Mobile	shortcodes@t-mobile.co.uk
64000-64999 69400-69499 89900-89999 84000-84999 89400-89499 89900-89999	Vodafone	<a href="mailto:SMSshortcodes@vodafone.co.uk">SMSshortcodes@vodafone.co.uk</a>

Details required for short code requests are shown on the forms overleaf.