

Frequently asked questions

Q. Why do you need a new non-emergency number?

A. The Government is committed to cutting crime and empowering citizens to keep their neighbourhoods safe. Key to achieving this is making it easier for the public to contact the police and report crime and disorder. The 2010 British Crime Survey found that only 54% of the public know how to contact their local police if they want to talk to them about policing, crime or anti-social behaviour.

Giving people an easy and memorable number to call to contact their local police force could improve reporting of crime and disorder, ease the pressure on 999 and help efficiently and effectively tackle crime and disorder.

Q. How will calls be answered?

A. Mobile phone signals and area codes determine which police force the caller is directed too. If a caller is within 1 mile of a force boundary they will be given options. Callers wishing to contact another force should still call 101 in the first instance.

Q. Where will calls be answered?

A. Calls to 101 will be answered by police call handlers in the control room of the local police force, in the same way as if the caller had dialled the old non-emergency number for that force. This ensures that staff with local knowledge can answer and deal with calls in a way that best meets the needs of their communities.

Q. How much will it cost the public to call 101?

A. From 1 July 2011, calls to 101 will cost 15 pence for the entire call, no matter how long you are on the phone – this applies to both landlines and mobile phones. For the first time ever, everyone calling the police for non-emergency matters will know exactly how much it will cost them and will be assured of equal access whether they are on a pay-as-you-go mobile or a home landline.

Q. Aren't you just making it more expensive for the public to contact the police?

A. The 15 pence per call charge is a competitive and transparent rate. Research shows that a small fixed charge would not put people off calling the service but would reduce the likelihood of the service being used inappropriately.

Q. Isn't this a move away from local policing?

A. No. This is about improving access to local policing. Calls to 101 are handled in the same way as existing non-emergency calls to police forces. The call handlers can connect callers to their local team or station or despatch officers to deal with incidents as required.