

Reducing Unwanted Mail & Telephone Calls

The aim of this leaflet is to provide advice on how to reduce the number of unwanted letters and telephone calls.

1) Telephone Preference Service (TPS) and Mailing Preference Service (MPS)

These services are for anyone who wants to be removed from most mailing and telephone sales lists in the UK. This will stop many of the direct marketing messages you receive but cannot stop them all, particularly if they originate from outside the UK.

Registration with these services is free, with the exception of the cost of the call or internet connection.

What is the Telephone Preference Service?

The Telephone Preference Service (TPS) is a central opt out register where individuals can register their wish not to receive unsolicited sales and marketing telephone calls. It is a legal requirement that companies do not make such calls to numbers registered on the TPS. Once a number has been registered, it will take around 28 days to become effective.

As well as your home landline phone, you can also register mobile phones. Registering your mobile number with the TPS will reduce the number of unsolicited sales and marketing calls you receive on your mobile but will not reduce text (SMS) marketing messages.

Register with TPS by telephone or online: 0345 070 0707 www.tpsonline.org.uk

What is the Mailing Preference Service?

The Mailing Preference Service (MPS) is a central opt out register where individuals can register their wish not to receive direct marketing mail that is addressed to them personally. The MPS will not stop mail from companies with whom you have done business in the past. It will also not stop mail that has been sent from overseas, unaddressed material or mail addressed to The Occupier.

Register with MPS by telephone or online: 0345 070 0705 www.mpsonline.org.uk

Please note: these services are automated and there may be a time delay between connection and hearing the automated voice.

2) Reducing Contact From Known Organisations

If you are receiving unwanted calls and / or post from a known business, it is always worth contacting them directly, in writing, and asking them to remove your contact details from their databases. Any reputable organisation should be willing to comply with your request.

The Fundraising Preference Service has been set up to help people stop direct marketing from a specific charity. You can also register on behalf of someone else. Further details can be found here: <https://public.fundraisingpreference.org.uk/> or you can call the helpline on 0300 303 3517

The Information Commissioners Office can also offer further advice and problems can be reported to them - <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public>

3) Using Technology to Reduce Unwanted Calls

Technology can be used in several ways to help reduce the number of calls received:

- a) Landline telephones – There are models available in high street stores and via the internet that have a “call blocking” option, for example some BT or Panasonic models.
- b) Caller Display / Caller ID - This is where the phone number of the person calling can be displayed on the phone’s display. To activate this service, contact your service provider. We are aware of situations where criminals have manipulated the display to show incorrect information or the number belonging to a genuine organisation.
- c) Call blocking devices – These are separate pieces of equipment which fit in the phone line between the socket and the landline telephone. No engineer is required. Examples include those sold by CPR (www.cprcallblocker.com / 0800 652 7780) or Truecall (www.truecall.co.uk / 0800 0 336 330). Trading Standards do have a limited number of units available for loan. Please contact us on 0115 804 1147 for further information.

It is worth shopping around as prices and models do vary. One important factor to consider is how many numbers the unit can block. Although some models can block 1000 numbers, others can only block 10. All call blocking devices require caller display to be activated on your line. Your service provider may charge an extra fee for this. Many units can work with community alarms, but it is advised to check the alarm after installation to ensure it is still working.

- d) Service providers – It is always worth speaking to your service provider to see what services they can offer. Both BT (BT Call Protect) and Sky (Sky Talk Shield) provide a call blocking service that people may find useful. At the time of writing (Feb 2020) there is no charge for the service.

We have been notified of people receiving calls from companies trying to sell call blocking services or devices. We would always advise against using any company that makes “cold calls”.

4) Consider Going Ex-directory

Some companies will use phone directories to contact people, by phone or post. If you don’t want to be contacted, it is worth asking for your details not to be included. Although being ex-directory won’t stop all unwanted calls or post, it can help to reduce the problem.

5) Read the Small Print When Buying Goods / Using Websites

When giving your contact details to a company, especially when using the internet, ensure you read the information about how they are going to use your contact details.

You may be given the option to tick or un-tick a box which will allow the company to send you marketing information. You may also be asked whether you give your permission to pass on your contact details to other organisations. To reduce the amount of unwanted mail or calls, trading standards would always suggest that permission is not given.

Many websites make the requirement to include a phone number compulsory when you complete their online form. If you do not want the company to call you, True Call have set up a number that you can enter - 0333 88 88 88.

Any company that calls this number will hear:

"trueCall38 is handling my calls. I prefer not to be contacted by phone, so please contact me via my email address. Goodbye!"

6) Opt Out of the Open Register

There is a legal requirement for everyone to supply information for the Electoral Register. However, residents can choose to opt out of the Open Register (also called Edited Register), which is a second copy of the list.

The names and address on the Open Register can be sold to any person, organisation or company and used for any number of purposes, including direct marketing.

Please contact your District Council if you wish to have your details removed from the Open Register or use this link <https://www.gov.uk/get-on-electoral-register>

7) Reducing the amount of unwanted text messages

Many people contact us to ask how they can stop unwanted text messages. Unfortunately, there is no miracle cure. We would always suggest being careful with your personal details. However, modern technology means that computer programs can generate phone numbers at random, and will keep guessing until it finds an active number.

One option is to send the message to your service provider. To report a marketing text send it to:

- EE, O2, Orange, T-mobile, Virgin Mobile, Tesco, giffgaff, Vodafone 7726
- Three 37726

It is important that you include the sender's number when you forward the message. You may get an automated response thanking you for the report and providing further instructions.

Further advice can be found here: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/problems/tackling-nuisance-calls-and-messages>

8) Check your bank statements

We would suggest that everyone regularly checks their banks statements so that any unwanted or fraudulent activity is identified as soon as possible. If you have any concerns about any entries, speak to your local branch in the first instance.

We would also suggest that you make a note of all your direct debits / standing orders that you have agreed to so that it is easy to identify those that have been set up by mistake or are a duplicate service, eg two insurance policies for fridge freezer breakdown.

9) Friends Against Scams

To find out more about scams please go to www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk and complete some free on-line training and register as a "Friend". This page also includes information about Scam Marshalls. Once registered, anyone can send their scam mail to the National Trading Standards Scams Team to be used as evidence in future investigative and enforcement work. This important work plays a large role in helping to stop scam mail going through people's letter boxes.

10) Further advice

If you are concerned about the amount of post or telephone calls you or a family member are receiving, please contact the Citizens Advice Service on 0808 223 1133 for further advice. Trading Standards are notified of all calls to this service.

For further advice or to refer something to Trading Standards, contact the Citizens Advice consumer service. This provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues. Visit www.adviceguide.org.uk or call the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

Produced by Nottinghamshire County Council Trading Standards, County House, Mansfield, NG19 7AQ www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards