

Mobile Users 'Need To Be Aware' Of Tariffs

Mobile phone bills could be placing consumers under increased financial pressure, new figures suggest.

January 22, 2008 (FPRC) -- Research by moneysupermarket indicates that an estimated one in five (20 per cent) mobile users occasionally, if not all the time, have received a demand for payment on their phone which is more expensive than they had originally anticipated. Meanwhile, it was suggested that the mobile phone sector generates more than 8.45 billion pounds in revenue every year from consumers who are on an uncompetitive tariff.

Overall, it was revealed that the typical Briton receives 166 free voice minutes and 133 texts per month as a part of their mobile phone or top-up package deal. However, it was indicated that the average consumer uses 23 voice minutes and 23 texts above the inclusive amount they receive in their price plans, meaning that they are paying up to an extra 130 pounds per year.

Through an unawareness of how much they are being charged on the various features of their mobile contract, or in getting a bill higher than they had anticipated, it could be possible that consumers begin to develop difficulties in meeting other demands on their spending in areas ranging from personal loans and mortgages to credit cards and transport costs.

Rob Barnes, head of broadband and mobiles at moneysupermarket, said: "I'd advise customers to be more aware of what package they have and what's available to them. People should check their monthly bill regularly, if they're using up all their allowance it's worth considering a move to a different tariff with more inclusive minutes and texts. It could save a lot of money in the long run."

Mr Barnes added that the reason mobile phone providers are often able to offer competitive-looking contract deals to customers is through charging them for extra services. "As our research shows, many people don't realise how much these additional services cost and are being stung when their bill arrives. I would urge customers to read through their contract and ensure they are fully aware of all costs additional to their inclusive minutes and texts," he stated.

Research from the price comparison website also indicated that a third (33 per cent) of mobile phone users are unaware how much they are spending on voicemail retrieval services, while one out of seven do not know what their monthly line rental costs are. In addition, it was revealed that 42 per cent have no idea as to the cost of getting in touch with their provider's customer support department.

For consumers struggling to get to grips with their mobile phone bills and other demands on their spending taking out a low cost consolidation loan might be helpful. By applying for these sort of cheap loans it is possible that borrowers can pay off bills, credit cards and other loans into a single repayment. This could be of particular use to Britons coming back home after a holiday. Last year, research by international mobile phone operator AwayPhone reported that despite moves by the European Commission to introduce limits those looking to use their mobile while abroad could pay "considerably more" than if they were back home. Sherry Madera, chief executive of the firm, suggested that because of last summer's unseasonably poor weather more people are looking to go abroad in the search for some sun. However, she stated that "their enjoyment of their holiday could

be severely compromised by the unpleasant shock of their phone bill when they arrive home”.

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