



Ministry  
of Justice

**Lord Timpson**  
Minister of State for Justice

Andy Slaughter MP  
Chair of Justice Committee

**MoJ ref:** SUB125412

1 July 2025

Dear Andy,

**Response to the Justice Committee – Cost of Phone Minutes to Prisoners**

Thank you for your letter of 20 June 2025 regarding the cost of phone minutes to prisoners.

This government is aware of the importance of supporting prisoners to maintain contact with family and other positive relationships, and the beneficial influence this can have on their wellbeing and rehabilitation. I have also met with the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman to discuss his concerns directly.

Please find the answers to your questions below:

***Could you confirm the current cost per minute of phone calls by prisoners?***

We have recently reduced call costs in the public prison estate by negotiating a 20% reduction to all UK landline and UK mobile numbers which came into effect from 1 April 2025 and these rates apply until 31 May 2027. Many of the privately managed prisons have since taken our lead and reduced their costs to align.

Calls to UK fixed lines

2.48 pence – during the week midnight Sunday to midday Friday

2.20 pence – during the weekend midday Friday to midnight Sunday

Calls to UK Mobiles

5.50 pence – during the week midnight Sunday to midday Friday

3.60 pence – during the weekend midday Friday to midnight Sunday

These costs are subject to a minimum call charge of 10 pence per call. The costs of overseas calls vary by country; but these account for less than 2% of all calls. Prisoners are also able to call the Samaritans helpline for support free of charge.

***How often in 2023-24 did prison governors have to add credit to a prisoners' phone allowance in serious circumstances? What was the total cost to HMPPS for this in 2023-24?***

Governors are able to top up specific accounts where they consider the circumstances merit this, for example where maintaining telephone contact with a friend or family member forms part of an agreed care plan, or when a prisoner has been informed of a family incident that requires they talk to a family member, but have insufficient funds to do so. Governors may also give credit or an advance to new prisoners on reception whilst they wait to have money sent in or start to receive prison pay. However, HMPPS is not able to provide this data to the Committee as any such expenditure would come direct from the budgets of individual establishments and is not centrally recorded. Additionally, we would not have record of the reasons for credit being applied by prison governors in each individual case.

***Has the Government been in contact with the provider to understand what the cost would be, if any, to providing the prison service with unlimited minutes for prisoner calls?***

There is no scope to review the current model within the life of the extant contract with the supplier. The contract is based on a concession model whereby HMPPS has outsourced the provision of the telephony service, including its infrastructure and maintenance, and systems to manage prisoner phone accounts, call monitoring, and a call routing service to connect only to permitted numbers, and the costs are largely recouped from the users of the service with little cost to the tax payer. This is why the prisoner telephony service cannot be directly compared with services that are available to the general public.

***Will the Government consider reforming the way prisoners pay for minutes, either by providing them with unlimited minutes at a fixed monthly cost, or by a system using the discretion of the prison Governor?***

Work has been initiated to design, procure and transition to a new service. This work, including any future transition, is technically and commercially complex, and transition to a new service is expected to commence in 2029. We aim to ensure continuity of the telephony service while also exploring opportunities to deliver service enhancements. Affordability will be a key objective in any new service, and consideration will be given to whether an alternative payment model might be more appropriate in the custodial environment.

I trust that this information will be useful to your enquiries, and I would be happy to assist should you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

**Lord Timpson  
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending**