



Best Practice Guide
for the provision of
Live Psychic Services
in the UK

Issue 1
September 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Best Practice Guide is intended to detail the current best practice guidelines for companies and individuals involved in the promotion and service provision of Live Psychic Services in the UK which use 09 Premium Rate (PRS) or Premium SMS payment facilities.

This Best Practice Guide has been drawn up in conjunction with the industry body AIME and its member companies who are involved in the provision of Live Psychic Services.

This Guide is intended to be supplementary to the [PhonepayPlus Code of Practice](#) which specifically deals with the requirements that need to be adhered to for the promotion and provision of live calls using Premium payment facilities to service users, which members are required to observe.

2. DEFINITION OF A LIVE PSYCHIC READING

This is a live reading given by a person representing the Service Operator to the service user via a telephone call or text or series of text messages or video call that uses the practices of astrology or tarot as the basis for the reading, which must not cover any areas considered as dealing in the Occult – for example necromancy or sorcery. These psychic readings are intended to be uplifting, entertaining and a positive experience for the service user.

The Industry is permitted by regulation to provide and promote services that are from the psychic genre, but not from the Occult.

3. REGULATIONS AROUND THE PROVISION OF LIVE PSYCHIC SERVICES

A Service Operator or Merchant Promoter who wishes to promote via editorial space or airtime or via advertising (or teleshopping on television) must first obtain a Live PRS Prior Permission Approval from PhonepayPlus and agree to be bound by the terms of the [PhonepayPlus Code of Practice](#).

In addition, TV Broadcasters who wish to broadcast Live Psychic Services content or advertising will need to request Ofcom to amend their Broadcast licences to include teleshopping. Ofcom will also act as the direct regulator of advertising for Participation TV (PTV) services (generally services employing PRS) using the standards approved by Ofcom in the Broadcast Committee for Advertising Practice ([BCAP Code of Practice](#)) for broadcast advertising.

4. HOW A LIVE PSYCHIC SERVICE WORKS

4.1 Charging of live premium readings services

Service users respond to a promotion and will either dial in to a premium charged 09X number or they will text in to a premium short code with key word. Alternatively, they will pay by using a credit card which will buy them so many minutes of talk time.

If they are dialling via a premium rate number, they will first hear a short (up to 15 seconds), pre-recorded pre-ambule before pressing the star key to proceed.

Companies may promote a variety of payment options to service users (e.g. PRS, Premium SMS, Credit and Debit Card) and, while only PRS and Premium SMS are governed by the PhonepayPlus Code of Practice the handling of readings should be handled in an identical manner, heeding the Best Practice guidelines contained in this document.

A service user should not be permitted to spend more than £30 per call if using 09 PRS.

4.2 Call handling of live psychic services

Service Operators will run IVR (Interactive Voice Response) platforms, or mobile messaging systems if using text interaction, which will enable psychics to log on from home or from a bureau environment, where the next available psychic will take the incoming call.

Alternatively service users may text in and will receive reply text messages live from a psychic, which will be charged at the advertised rate. Incoming texts will be distributed among available psychics for them to prepare a response.

Service Operators agree to at all times have sufficient live psychics available to handle the incoming demand for readings.

As a prerequisite of the PhonepayPlus [Prior Permission Approval](#) being granted ALL readings given to service users must be recorded on equipment approved by PhonepayPlus and call and text records must be archived and available for inspection for up to 6 months.

Service Operators and their staff must be made aware that the service and the operation of that service must adhere to the provisions of the [Data Protection Act](#) and all readings which are recorded and stored must remain confidential unless access is requested by PhonepayPlus or the police.

4.3 The recorded preamble to live services

The [PhonepayPlus Prior Permission Approval](#) and Code, require live services to have a brief pre-ambule, which should not be unnecessarily protracted, warning the service user of the following:

- Cost of the service
- If not paying – ask the bill payers permission first
- Service available to those over 18 years of age only
- That all calls are recorded

When a chargeable pre-amble is played to a service user there must be psychics available to take the call immediately after the pre-amble as the whole duration of the call is charged at the same rate when using 09X premium access.

If promoting services in Eire stipulate that services are provided “*For entertainment only*” on the pre-amble as well as the advertising.

5. RECRUITMENT OF PSYCHIC READERS

Service Operators agree to abide by the following:

- 5.1 Psychics will be carefully recruited and vetted and tested for their skill and ability in the specific area of psychic reading.
- 5.2 All psychics engaged will receive proper and thorough training as to the scope of the readings, (what is allowed and not allowed) and also be made aware of the key elements relating to the provision of live psychic services contained in the [PhonepayPlus Code of Practice](#). They will be expected to sign a letter of confirmation to this effect, to confirm that they will adhere to the PhonepayPlus Code and this Best Practice Guide, a copy of which is to be held by the Service Operator.
- 5.3 Service Operators should monitor closely how calls are handled by new psychics and keep a record of when these checks are made for each psychic.
- 5.4 Psychics should receive refresher training and should be reacquainted with the [PhonepayPlus Codes](#) and this Best Practice Guide no less than every 6 months and a record of such training should be held at the Service Operator's premises.
- 5.5 Service Operators should conduct random checks of all psychic readers and note that such checks have been made and maintain files on such checks.

6. PROMOTION OF LIVE PSYCHIC SERVICES

- 6.1 Service Operators agree to adhere to the prevailing [PhonepayPlus Code](#) and Ofcom regulations in relation to the promotion of such services.
- 6.2 Service Operators are prohibited from promoting premium live services dealing in areas of the Occult on television and radio under Ofcom rules contained in the Ofcom approved [BCAP Code of Practice](#).
- 6.3 Services must not be marketed to those under 18 years and reasonable efforts must be made to establish that callers accessing services are over 18 years of age.
- 6.4 Hours of opening must be stated in advertising if the service is open for less than 24 hours / day.
- 6.5 The cost of the service must be clearly shown in any promotional copy.
- 6.6 The Service Operator name must be included along with a customer services number (charged at standard network rates).
- 6.7 In the Terms and Conditions and in any promotion it must be stated the service is for “entertainment purposes only”

7. HOW READINGS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED

7.1 Following are the requirements of the PhonepayPlus Code under which you are approved to provide a live reading service to callers

The following excerpts from the [PhonepayPlus Code \(11TH edition\)](#) are specific clauses that Service Operators and live readers must adhere to.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.2 LEGALITY

Services and promotional material must comply with the law. They must not contain anything which is in breach of the law, nor omit anything which the law requires. Services and promotional material must not facilitate or encourage anything which is in any way unlawful.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.3 HARM and OFFENCE

5.3.1 Services and Promotional Material must not.....

- a) Result in any unreasonable invasion of privacy*
- b) Induce an unacceptable sense of fear, anxiety or distress*
- c) Encourage or incite any person to engage in dangerous practices or to use harmful substances*
- d) Induce or promote racial disharmony*
- e) Cause grave or widespread offence*
- f) Debase, degrade or demean.*

- [Ref 5.3.1](#) a) Try to avoid asking the service user for too many personal details. The psychic should not ask for addresses, surnames or any information not needed to fulfil the reading (see PhonepayPlus section 6.3.1b below)
- [Ref 5.3.1](#) b) Try to give positive readings that are uplifting rather than focusing on negative aspects in health, money relationships – remember what is promoted “Services are provided for entertainment only”
- [Ref 5.3.1](#) c) Do not “*Encourage or incite any person to engage in dangerous practices or to use harmful substances*” This concerns spells, advising on unproven alternative medications or alternative practices such as the Occult or any disciplines that form part of an Occult reading.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.3 HARM and OFFENCE

5.3.2 Services and Promotional Material must not in circumstances where it is not reasonable for a consumer to expect such content or material (and subject to 5.3.1 above):

- a) Contain material including violence, sadism or cruelty, or be of a repulsive or horrible nature.**
- b) Involve the use of foul language**

- **Ref 5.3.2** a) Do not encourage callers in readings to attempt to get even with people who have hurt them in their past life or dwell on past traumas in their life.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.4 FAIRNESS

5.4.1 Services and promotional material must not:

- a) Mislead, or be likely to mislead in anyway,**
- b) Take unfair advantage of any characteristic or circumstance, which may make consumers vulnerable**

- **Ref 5.4.1** a) Do not “*Mislead, or be likely to mislead in any way*” by inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.4 FAIRNESS

5.4.2 Callers must not be unreasonably prolonged or delayed.

- **Ref 5.4.2** Psychics should never leave a caller hanging on, should respond to the caller as soon as the service user comes onto the line and not answer any other phone calls while on line.

PhonepayPlus Section 5.4 FAIRNESS

5.4.3 Services must not be of a nature that encourages unauthorised use

- **Ref 5.4.3** Psychics should not tell the service user to get relatives who need a reading to call up who may be underage without checking first.

PhonepayPlus Section 6.3 THE CONDUCT OF LIVE SERVICES

6.3.1 Unless PhonepayPlus grants permission to do otherwise

- b) Service providers must actively discourage service users from seeking or giving out surnames, places of work, addresses, or geographic phone numbers or arranging or attempting to arrange any meeting while connected to a live service.**
- c) Service providers must ensure that operators use reasonable endeavours to prevent persons under 18 years of age from taking part in any live service.**
- d) If an operator has reasonable grounds upon questioning the service user to suspect that the service user is under 18, the reader and service provider must immediately end the service for that service user.**

PhonepayPlus Section 6.3 THE CONDUCT OF LIVE SERVICES

6.3.2 The service provider shall take reasonable steps to identify and cut off calls made without the permission of the bill payer

7. 2 Additional areas to be mindful of when giving readings;

Offering life changing advice

The psychic uses his or her skills and/or tools to give the service user an overview of a situation or a prediction. The psychic must never advise the service user on what he or she SHOULD or MUST do. This decision is up to the service user who must direct his or her own future.

Psychics should be mindful that readings broadcast on TV also form part of the promotion and must not make any claims as to the efficacy or accuracy of their readings under [BCAP Code rule 15.5.3](#).

Truthful readings

The service user should expect to hear a truthful and genuine reading which is sympathetically given, and they should not be given negative readings. If a psychic is unable to read for that service user, the user should be told this with an apology rather than the psychic making things up that are not appropriate. A refund could be offered and a referral given to try another reader by calling the service again.

Handling callers / service users who are risk

Service Operators should maintain up to date referral points and contact details for professional agencies where specialist help can be given to the caller (such as a suicidal person who could be referred to the Samaritans, giving the caller their contact number).

If a service user admits they are depressed or feel suicidal, the psychic should be sensitive to their needs and not exploit their vulnerability. The focus should be on being supportive to the service user's needs, giving them positive reassurances wherever possible. The psychic reader should inform the Service Operator immediately of the nature of the call with the service user and provide as many other relevant details which should be recorded at the Service Operator's premises, for future reference.

7.3 Other areas where readings should not be given

Medical advice

Medical advice or predictions should not be given and where necessary service users should be referred to their GP or be told to seek medical advice.

Pregnancy or the sex of children

A psychic must not say if they think the user is pregnant or not, if they will be within a certain time period, nor should they claim to determine the sex of an unborn child to a pregnant user.

Legal advice

The psychic must not divine the outcome of a forthcoming court case, or get involved in any legal advice. If necessary tell the user to go to a solicitor or seek legal advice. Citizens' Advice numbers can also be given.

Financial advice

Psychics must not give ANY SPECIFIC financial advice or tell the service user that they are going to get windfalls, win the lottery, or that their financial situation will change positively or negatively, unless part of a general reading where the whole reading is positive.

Negative readings

Service users are not calling to have doom and gloom forecasts. Where a negative is mentioned, a positive must also be given in a realistic and truthful context. Remember, these psychic readings are intended to be uplifting, entertaining and a positive experience for the service user.

8. RECOURSE AND ENQUIRES FROM CONSUMERS

Any enquiry or complaint from a service user must be handled efficiently and a record of the name of the caller, their contact details and the nature of the enquiry or complaint must be taken and recorded and maintained by the Service Operator.

Enquiries and complaints should be dealt with in a target time of 48 business hours.

9. CUSTOMER REFUNDS

Handling of dissatisfied callers:

- Psychics should refer dissatisfied service users back to the service promotion for the customer services number of the Service Operator, who can respond to their complaint promptly and efficiently.
- Psychics must note time/date and name of the service user if the service user expresses dissatisfaction with them and pass this to their supervisor for recording and, if necessary, the service user CLI (Caller Line Identification) can be traced to complete the record
- Customer Services can offer dissatisfied callers free readings via 08 numbers or refund according to the preference of the caller.
- Where there is a complaint about a specific psychic, the Service Operator should listen to the appropriate recordings for this psychic and if necessary suspend the psychic pending further investigation.
- The psychic should report any unusual service users that stand out from the rest – abusive, excessive users, underage, not responsible for paying, complaints etc.
- Service Operators should be prepared to refund, at their discretion, costs of calls or texts in genuine cases where there has been unauthorised access to the service by the person not paying the ‘phone bill’ or where the caller has made a legitimate complaint about the reading they were given.
- Records of such refunds must be recorded by the Service Operator and maintained for 6 months.

I agree to abide by this AIME Best Practice Guide for the provision of Live Psychic Services

Service Operator:

Company name

Director / senior manager responsible for compliance reporting:

Name

Signature.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 1

EDITORIAL WORKING GROUP

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