



Choosing a Phone System for Your Startup

From landlines to apps, here's how to choose a phone system that's reliable, aids productivity and boosts your company's profitability.



A big hello from CircleLoop, and Co-founder Damian Hanson.

“Hi, I’m Damian, co-founder of CircleLoop – a cloud-based phone system that makes traditional, outdated phone systems redundant using a powerful desktop and mobile app.

Back in 2017, we were so excited to launch CircleLoop, because we felt that businesses like yours were either totally ignored, or were presented with unsuitable, outdated services from telecom vendors and their old-school approaches to business communication.

We believed there was a better way, one that would specifically benefit entrepreneurial businesses. We wanted to challenge norms in the telephony space, so we developed a cost-effective and reliable phone system that can be set up in three minutes flat and give the user complete control and flexibility. No jargon or confusing headaches - just simple, productive and efficient communications.

Whether you’re just starting out, or you’ve survived your first year – congratulations! Both are big steps that should definitely be celebrated. You’ve joined a culture of innovation, excitement and persistence, so keep going!

In the guide that follows, you’ll find everything you need to know about current business phone usage in the UK - which systems are in use, which are falling in popularity and what’s on the horizon.

Today, perhaps more than ever due to the pandemic, your phone system is crucial in giving you the tools to communicate. And in today’s changing and challenging work environment, having the ability to access reliable telephony wherever you are is more important than ever.”

Damian Hanson

 @circleloopHQ

Start-up Tips



As a startup co-founder myself, I’ve stood in your shoes and been where you are now. So the best advice I can give is:

- **Think big, aim high.**
- **Make mistakes, learn from them.**
- **Build a great team.**
- **Stay focused, make money whilst saving money.**
- **Enjoy doing it.**



As your startup expands, you need a system that can match your growth. By the end of this guide, you should know a little bit more about the options available to you and know what to do next.

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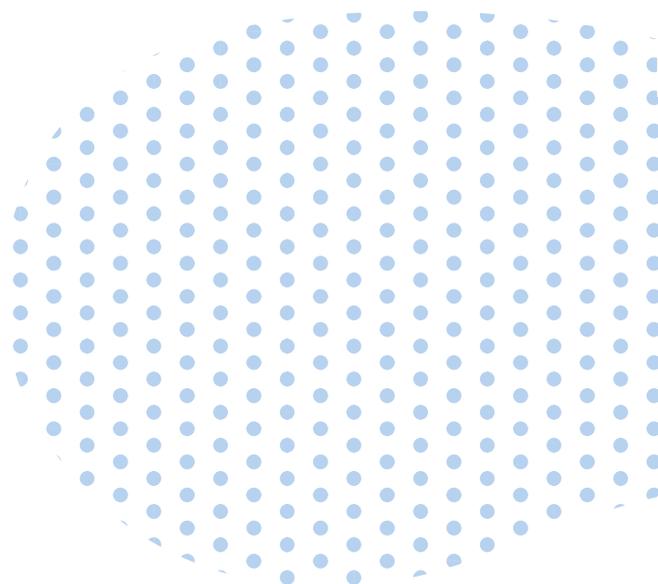
You've made your decision, what should your business do next?

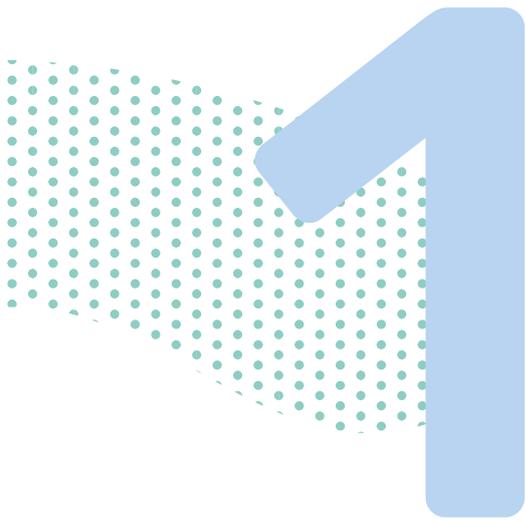
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We cover the pros and cons of each system to help you make an informed decision.

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Business Phones in the UK

Even in the age of instant messages, emails and social media, 75 percent of people in the UK still believe that calling is the most effective way of getting a quick response. Business phones are a vital part of any company, giving you the tools you need to succeed.

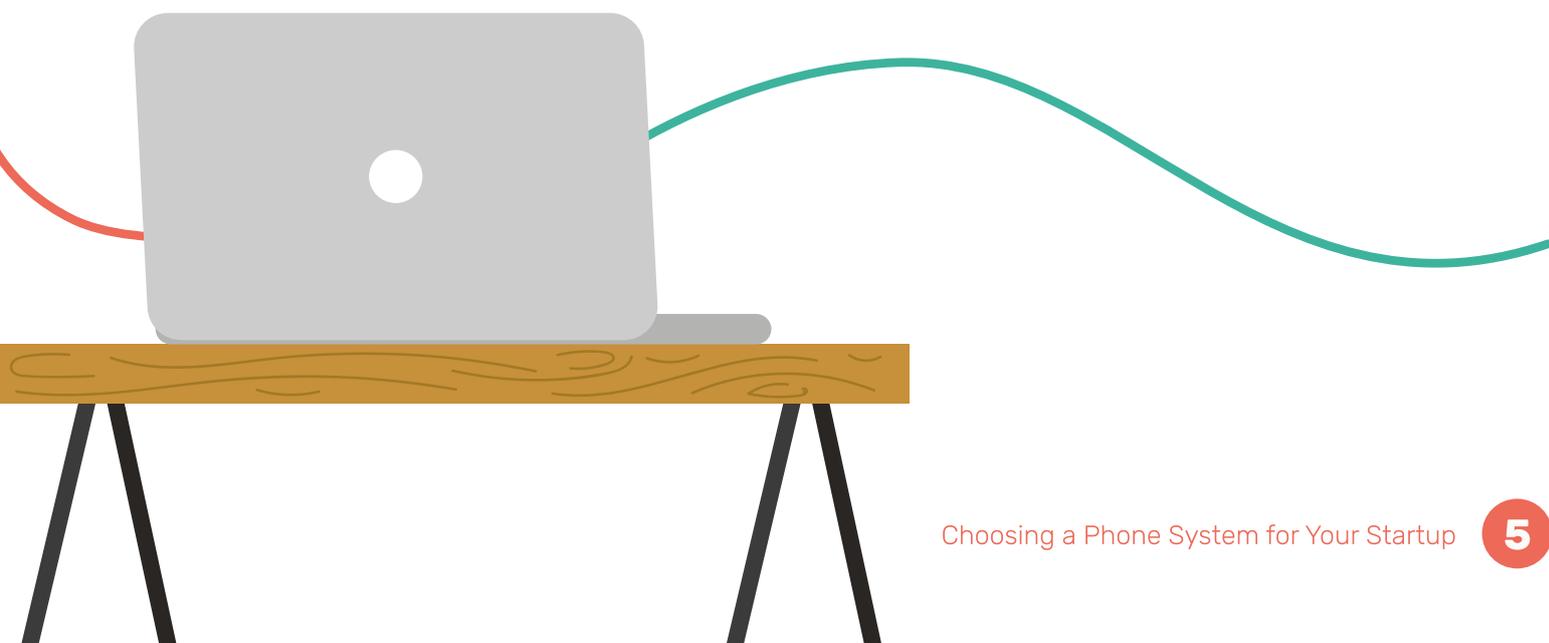


Landlines are the traditional favourite and once upon a time, every office in the UK used them. Despite their former glory, they're now seen as relics and a clunky reminder of how things used to be done.

They're still used by some businesses, because seasoned veterans swear by their reliability without trying modern alternatives.

But a report by RootMetrics found that 95 percent of people asked believed they wouldn't struggle without a landline. With a 40 percent decrease in fixed voice calls, it's clear that landlines won't be around for much longer. In fact, there are plans to phase out landline usage in the UK entirely. Good news for those fed up with expensive line rentals and long contracts.

This is thanks to a gradual switch towards internet based telephony. Sometimes referred to as VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), these new systems offered flexibility and new features.



App-based phone systems are the latest option available to UK businesses, using the cloud and an internet connection to conduct calls on the move. Staff are able to use their existing devices, such as computers and mobile phones to work wherever they are.

Gone are the days of staff just working from 9-5 in the office each day. They want to work remotely or on the move, being able to access important files on the train or at the coffee shop. And never be offline.

No two businesses are alike and it's important you find the right solution to suit your specific needs and requirements. We'll break down each phone system and outline the pros and cons to help you make an informed choice. First, some explanations.



Some businesses are run entirely through mobile phones and apps. 73 percent of CEOs use apps to run their business each day and it's entirely possible for you to completely make the switch to mobile.

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Which Options are Available?

Before making any major decisions, it's worth taking the time to find out more about each phone system.





Legacy/Landline

Tried and tested, landlines use analogue systems that run using the telephone company's copper wiring. You'll pay a line rental charge, usually as part of a business landline package, to the telephone company for use of their cables.

Line rentals, setup fees, service plans and contracts can all start to add up, so many businesses looked for more cost-effective alternatives. Switching providers and installation times can interrupt your business' operations and reduce billable hours.

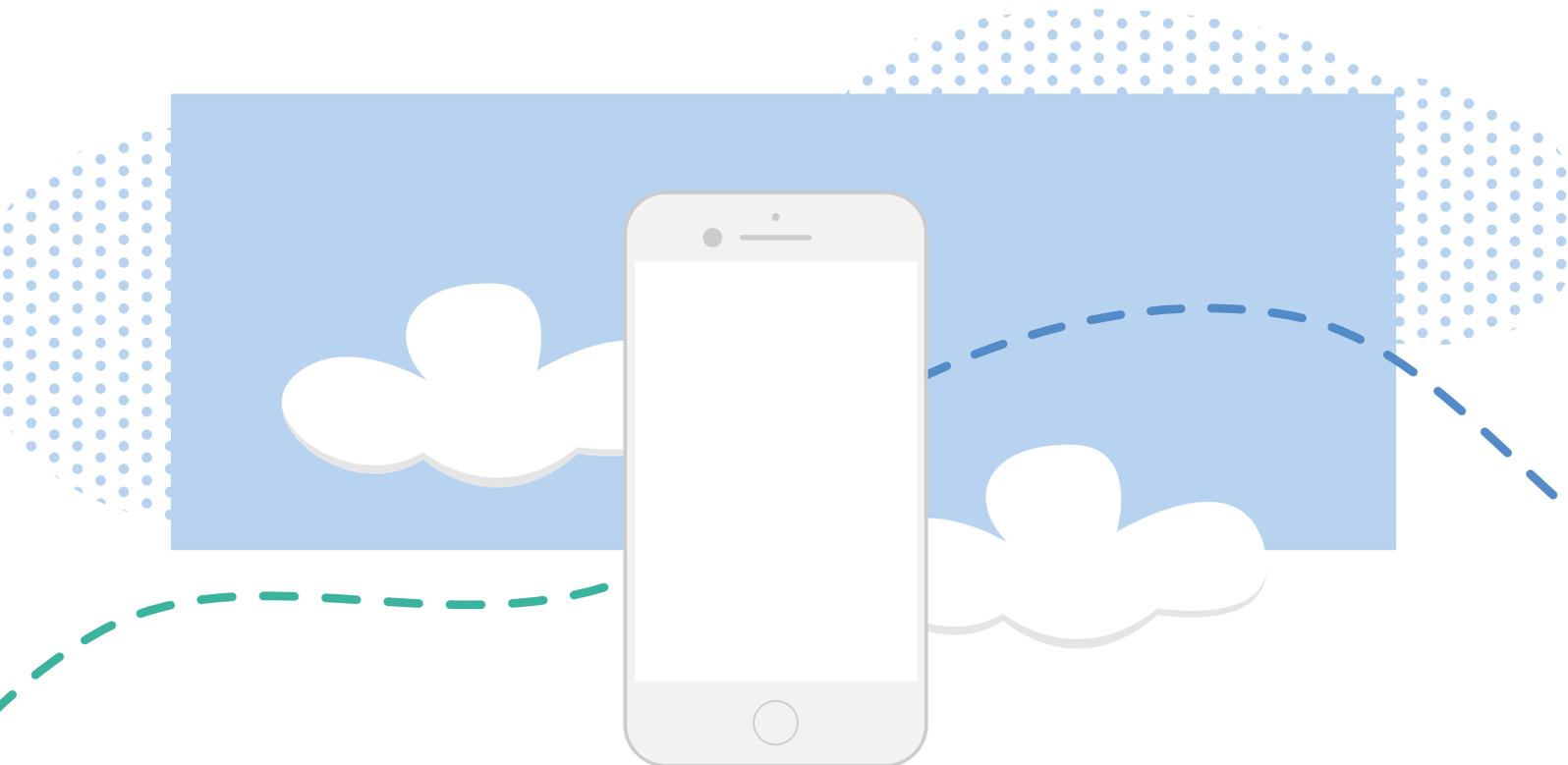
Providers offered lengthy contracts that businesses had to sign up to. This meant that even as technology improved and processes changed, they were still tied down with inflexible contracts, often up to four years at a time!

Cloud and App Based Systems

The new kids on the block. Just when the business world was getting used to internet based phones, the next, natural evolution has arrived.

Cloud based systems are an extension of internet telephony systems, allowing you to make calls on the go from mobile devices. The real game-changers are the app-based phone systems. Everything else in your life is controlled through apps, so why shouldn't your business calls?

All of your calls, numbers and features are controlled and managed through a desktop or mobile app. It offers everything a traditional phone system would and then so much more. There's no need for extra hardware, long contracts or setup fees.



VoIP/Internet Telephony

Most businesses across the UK have already made the switch to an internet based phone system. It takes analogue audio signals that are also used for legacy systems and converts them into digital data which can be transmitted online.

With just a standard internet connection, you're able to completely bypass the need for the telephone company's cables. Since their introduction, internet based phone systems have revolutionised how the world's businesses speak to each other.

You typically still use desk phones, you'll just need models that are specially created to have an ethernet connector. This allows you to connect directly to your router. Internet telephony handsets have everything they need to handle the calls built in. This does mean that you need to buy new phones, plugs and cables when new members of the team join.

If you'd like a little free space on your desk, then you can eliminate the need for handsets altogether and just call computer-to-computer. All you need is suitable software, a microphone, speakers, a sound card and with an internet connection you're good to go.

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Which System is Best?

Each system has advantages and disadvantages so you'll need to weigh them up before committing to one. There isn't really a perfect answer and two similar businesses might benefit from different systems. We've outlined the pros and cons of each system to help you make a decision.



Legacy/Landline

PROS

- ✓ Reliable and familiar.
- ✓ Offers almost 100 percent uptime.
- ✓ Easy to use and maintain.
- ✓ Not affected by power outages.
- ✓ Excellent call quality, even when the internet is off.



CONS

- ✗ Has to be hosted on site and hard to scale for growth.
- ✗ Expensive in the short and long term - line rentals, setup fees and service plans.
- ✗ Tied into lengthy contracts.
- ✗ Obsolete technology that will be phased out by 2025.
- ✗ Difficult to repair and find replacements.
- ✗ Immovable, fixed infrastructure.

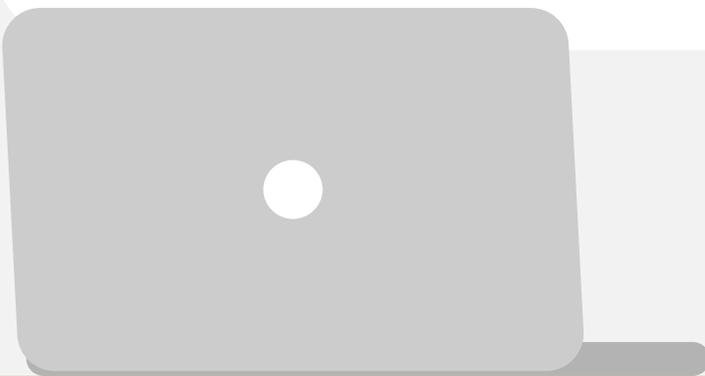
Internet Based

PROS

- ✓ Easy to use and familiar desk phone interface.
- ✓ New features added regularly.
- ✓ Cost-effective to set up and maintain.
- ✓ Use desk phone, mobile or computer for calls.
- ✓ More flexible than landlines.

CONS

- ✗ Relies on the quality of your internet connection.
- ✗ Requires an ethernet cable and socket.
- ✗ Power outages disrupt the entire system.
- ✗ Need to upgrade to compatible hardware.
- ✗ Less flexible than app based options.



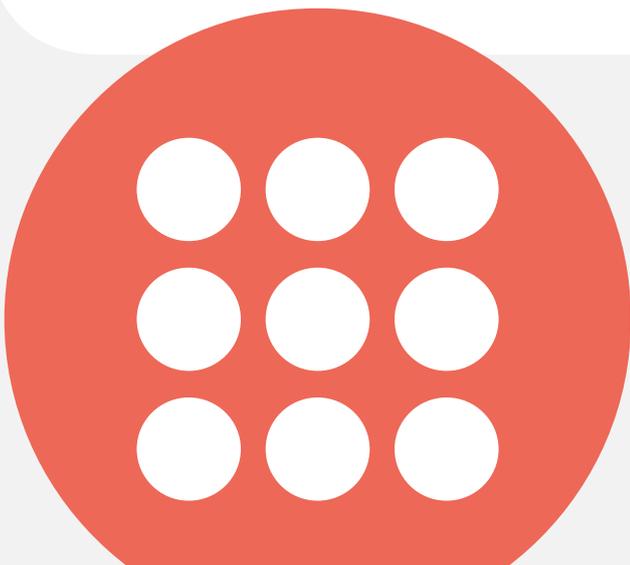
App Based

PROS

- ✓ Flexible and portable. Call on the go.
- ✓ International numbers available for global business.
- ✓ Integrate, track tasks with notifications and inform your CRM.
- ✓ Just another app to use.
- ✓ Supports headsets if that's your preference.

CONS

- ✗ Won't work without either an internet connection or phone signal.
- ✗ Relies on staff having relatively up to date software.
- ✗ As it's on mobiles, reliant on battery life.



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Find the Right System to Suit You

The most expensive system might have all the features anyone could ever ask for, but that doesn't mean it's right for you. Here are a few questions to think about when making your decision that can help you to make the right choice.



Are you tied down into a contract?

If you don't like the service you're receiving, you should be able to leave. It's as simple as that. Legacy systems often came with long contracts that cause issues down the line when it comes to upgrades.

Is it easy to use?

There's no point implementing a new phone system that's difficult to use. It needs to be easy to grasp for your staff. If it needs explaining every so often, then you'll see a downturn in productivity and the billable hours of staff.

How long will it take to get up and running?

Switching phone systems can grind the whole office to a halt. With traditional systems, you'd need to coordinate with a specialist and wait for the phone line to switch over. With app based systems, there's no waiting. Just register online and you're ready to get started. This applies whenever you onboard new staff.

Does it integrate with my existing software?

If you already have a well-established tech stack that your business relies on, you should look for a phone system that easily integrates. Implementing a system that doesn't work with existing programmes fixes one issue but creates others.

Does it improve office productivity?

No one minds paying a little extra if the system introduced improves productivity. Don't just look for the cheapest option, look for one that is more likely to help staff to get their work done. This will help your startup to grow.

Can your remote workers use the system?

Due to the worldwide pandemic, growing numbers of people are ditching the early morning commute and working from home. So it's really important your phone system is accessible for remote workers. Clients should also think they're ringing the office, even if they're not. The latest systems can be used by your staff on the move, wherever they are.



Is it future proofed, because landlines aren't?

As a startup, you'll have plans for growth in the forthcoming months and years. You need a phone system that can scale with you, meeting your ever-changing needs. You don't have time to look at new phone systems every 18 months.

Landlines certainly aren't ready for whatever's coming next, in fact they're heading out the door. From 2021, BT will stop maintaining the landline system and the network will be shut down by the end of 2025. This makes investing in landlines and the associated hardware a bit of a dead rubber.

App based phone systems are the future, offering all the flexibility a growing startup needs.

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Next Steps

Traditional phone systems are old-fashioned and there are a lot of unwanted costs to worry about like line rentals, contracts, service plans and setup fees. App based phone systems are new, innovative and ready to grow with you.



Easy to learn and even easier to use, CircleLoop brings the entire traditional phone system into one desktop or mobile app. We don't bombard you with complicated jargon or features you don't need, making the whole process of signing up quick and simple. We're also UK-built and UK-based, which makes us unique in the business phone marketplace.

Here are some of the features currently available with CircleLoop:



INTERNATIONAL NUMBERS

Add international numbers from over 80 countries to conduct truly global business.



LIVE ACTIVITY FEED

Keep track of all calls and messages in real-time with the activity feed.



CALL RECORDING

Record your calls and download the audio files to improve your sales process.



CALL TRANSFERS AND FORWARDING

Quickly and easily transfer phone calls to other members of the team.



MOBILE/DESKTOP APPS

Make and receive calls in the office or on the move.



CALLER MENUS AND GREETINGS

Create bespoke caller greetings and team extensions.

We offer dedicated, UK-based support should you experience any technical problems. You can access our experts via email or over the phone and they'll be able to guide you through your issue. We also offer a full knowledge base of support videos and articles to help you get the most out of CircleLoop.

We're always talking to our community of users to examine ways of improving the app, taking on board their suggestions and adding new features. Users can suggest improvements and enhancements on our [public Trello board](#) and see what's coming next with our technical roadmap.



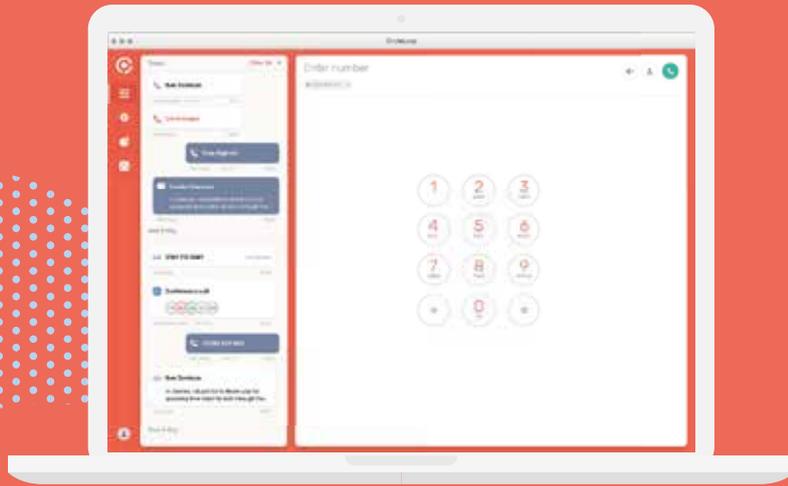
There are two different pricing plans available with CircleLoop, but neither of them need any contracts or set up fees.

<p>Pay as you go</p> <p>£5</p> <p>(+VAT) monthly per user no contract</p>	<p>Unlimited</p> <p>£15</p> <p>(+VAT) monthly per user no contract</p>
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From just £5 a month you can pay as you go. This plan offers a free UK number, all of the CircleLoop features listed above, unlimited inbound calls and UK outbound and international calls from just 3p a minute.

We'd recommend the second of our payment plans, which offers unlimited calls for just £15 a month. You get everything from the pay as you go plan but you can make unlimited outbound calls to UK, USA, Canada and Ireland for free. But why not get in touch with us for a personalised quotation?

Or, if you prefer, we've designed our app and system to be totally self-service. Installation is as easy as any other app and there are no setup fees.



Our powerful CRM integrations also help to level-up productivity in your business with instant click to call, automatic call activity logging and full contact synchronisation for all your users.

Don't just take our word for it, try CircleLoop today with a free 7-day trial. We don't need any card details and if you don't like the system, you can just leave without a fuss. There aren't any nasty surprises.

Enter your name, your business, an email address and a password and you're ready to go. You'll immediately have access to all of CircleLoop's useful features. Start your free trial today and transform the way your business communicates.

[Click Here To Demo Your Next Phone System](#)

Or chat to our team: 03330 50 60 70

