



# Restricted Radio Services

Annual Report 2008

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## Section 1

# Introduction

Restricted service licences (RSLs) are granted by Ofcom under the Broadcasting Act 1990 (section 104(6)). Further information is contained in our document 'Restricted Service Licences: Notes for Applicants', which can be found at: [www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/rsls/rslapps/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/radio/ifi/rbl/rsls/rslapps/).

There are three main types of RSL (short-term RSLs, long-term RSLs and Audio Distribution Systems RSLs), and these licences are available for a range of uses. A short definition of each is given below.

<b>Short-term RSLs (S-RSLs)</b>	Are granted for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• coverage of special events</li><li>• other special projects (e.g. training)</li><li>• trial services (e.g. in preparation for applying for a community radio licence)</li></ul> Licensees are limited to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a small coverage area</li><li>• a usual maximum of 28 consecutive days</li><li>• a maximum of two licences per year, with a minimum four-month gap between the end of the first and the start of the second (but only one per year within the M25)</li></ul> There are some exceptions to the consecutive days requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• on AM for coverage of a series of events</li><li>• within a stadium on FM at very low power</li></ul>
<b>Long-term RSLs (L-RSLs)</b>	Are granted for : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a service provided within a clearly-defined single site occupied by an establishment such as a university, hospital, military barracks, marina or shopping centre</li><li>• broadcasting usually on AM only (FM is available in some locations)</li><li>• up to five years (renewable)</li></ul>
<b>Audio Distribution Systems RSLs (ADS-RSLs)</b>	Are granted for : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• services provided within a site, such as a sports stadium or conference centre</li><li>• coverage of events or other temporary purposes (e.g. commentary, translation services)</li><li>• services provided at the same site, or at a number of different locations</li><li>• low power services broadcasting on spectrum other than FM or AM, the access to which has been secured separately</li><li>• a five-year period</li></ul>

## Section 2

# Summary

### Short-terms RSL (S-RSLs):

During 2008 we received 504 applications for S-RSLs from groups and individuals throughout the UK.

From these, a total of 438 temporary radio services were given licences for a wide variety of purposes. For example there were radio stations at sports events, for religious purposes, for schools and colleges, music festivals and other cultural events, or for drive-in movies at various locations.

The number of applications we received rose by 2% in 2008 but the number of licences issued dropped by 2%, compared to 2007.

In 2008 around a third of these temporary radio services broadcast for seven days or fewer, with a further third on-air for between three and four weeks.

98% of services broadcast on the FM waveband. Only 10% of stations licensed broadcast at very low power, but such services are useful when only a small broadcast area is needed for example, drive-in movies, or services within sports stadia.

### Long-term RSLs (L-RSLs):

There are 98 services operating under long-term RSLs around the UK. Of these, ten licences were issued or renewed during 2008.

The L-RSL services can be broken down as follows:

- 48 of the licences are held by educational establishments;
- 37 are in hospitals;
- 11 are on military bases;
- One is a tourist information service; and
- One provides traffic and travel information at a conference centre.

### Audio Distribution Systems Restricted Service Licences (ADS-RSL)

The total number of ADS-RSL holders is currently four. During 2008 one application was received, from Barnsley Football Club in South Yorkshire to provide commentary of football matches for spectators.

## Section 3

# Short-term Restricted Service Licences (S-RSLs) in 2008

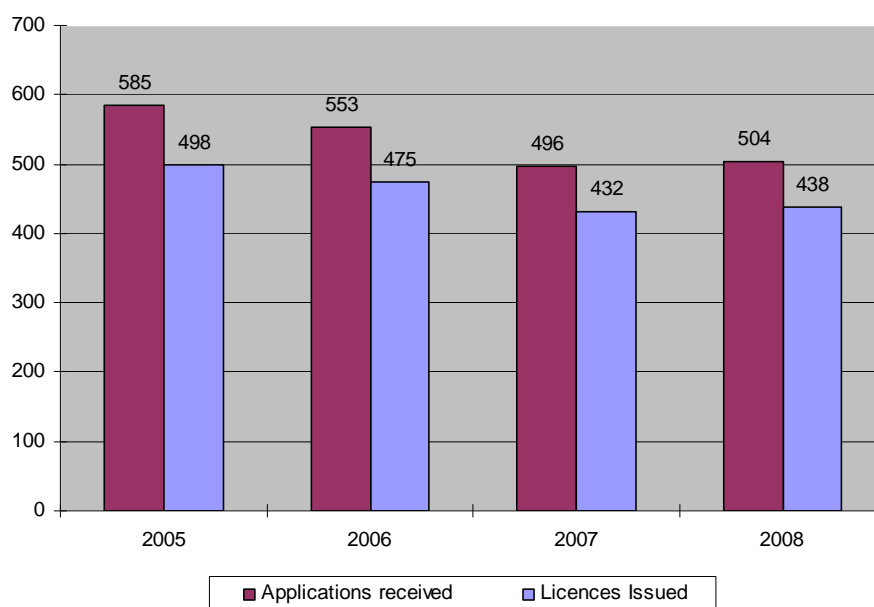
### Applications received and licences issued

These temporary licences are restricted in duration (a usual maximum of up to 28 days) and coverage (they are for small-scale community use). They are typically used to broadcast information and other material for a range of sports, cultural or religious events, or for training or educational purposes or in preparation for applying for a five-year community radio licence, for example.

In 2008 we received 504 S-RSL applications; 438 licences were issued, 44 applications were rejected and 22 were cancelled by the applicant prior to broadcasting. For comparisons of applications received and licences issued in 2008 and in previous years, see figure one below.

The most common reason for rejecting an application in 2008 was due to other RSL services already agreed in the area and a lack of suitable frequencies for further services. In previous years the majority of rejections were due to Ofcom's policy of not licensing S-RSLs around the time that a new community or commercial service is launching.

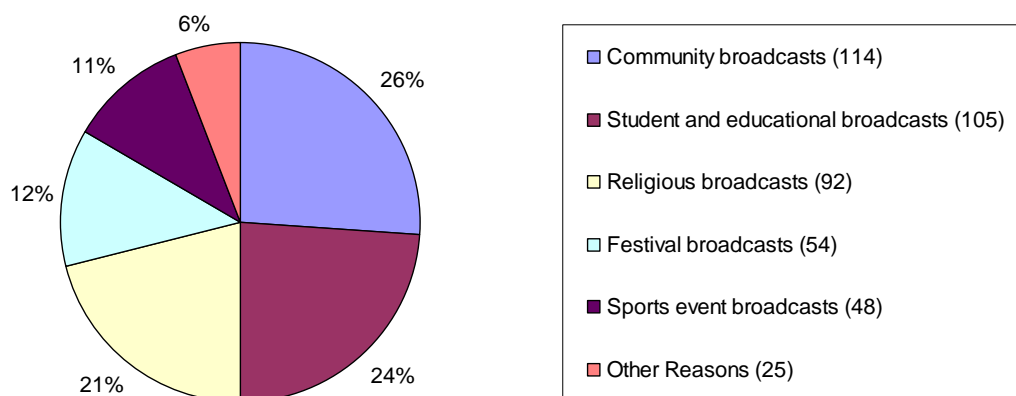
**Figure 1: S-RSL applications received and licences issued by year**



## Notable trends for S-RSLs in 2008

- The number of applications for S-RSLs rose by 2% in 2008 but the number of licences actually issued dropped by 2%, compared to 2007 figures. This was caused by a near doubling in the number of applications withdrawn by the applicant prior to broadcasting compared to the previous year.
- The breakdown of S-RSL usage showed the reasons given for broadcasting by applicants in 2008 were very similar to 2007, with very small increases in religious and community broadcasts and a similar decline in demand for most other reasons.
- The breakdown of duration of S-RSL broadcasts showed demand for licences for broadcasts of seven days or fewer was highest at 35% followed closely by broadcasts between 22-28 days (34%). In 2007 demand was very similar: broadcasts of 22-28 days (35%) followed by seven days or fewer (34%).
- Broadcasting on FM at a power level above one watt is the preferred choice for nearly all applicants (89%).

Figure 2: S-RSL licences issued in 2008 by purpose



It should be noted that some S-RSLs are difficult to classify, especially as they may broadcast for more than one purpose (for example a community radio triallist may broadcast to coincide with a local arts festival, and such a broadcast could fall under the 'community' or 'festival' heading).

## Community broadcasts (114)

Community and community trial broadcasts showed a very small increase of just one licence in 2008 compared to 2007. The demand was mainly from groups who submitted applications for community radio licences as part of the second round which began in 2006.

### **Student and educational broadcasts (105)**

Demand for licences for student and educational broadcasts remained static in 2008 when compared to the figures of the previous years. Also, as seen in 2007, a larger proportion of applications have come from educational establishments such as secondary schools and sixth form colleges rather than universities.

### **Religious broadcasts (92)**

In 2008 there was a small rise of five licences issued for religious services compared to 2007. A third of all the licences issued for religious purposes were for the observance of Ramadan and around half of all religious broadcasts were for Muslims. Licences were also issued for services for Sikhs, Christians and Hindus.

### **Sports event broadcasts (48)**

The number of licences issued to sporting events dropped slightly in comparison to 2007 when 50 licences were issued. The range of events which broadcast restricted services still remains diverse and includes motor rallies, the Wimbledon tennis championships, yachting regattas and golf tournaments.

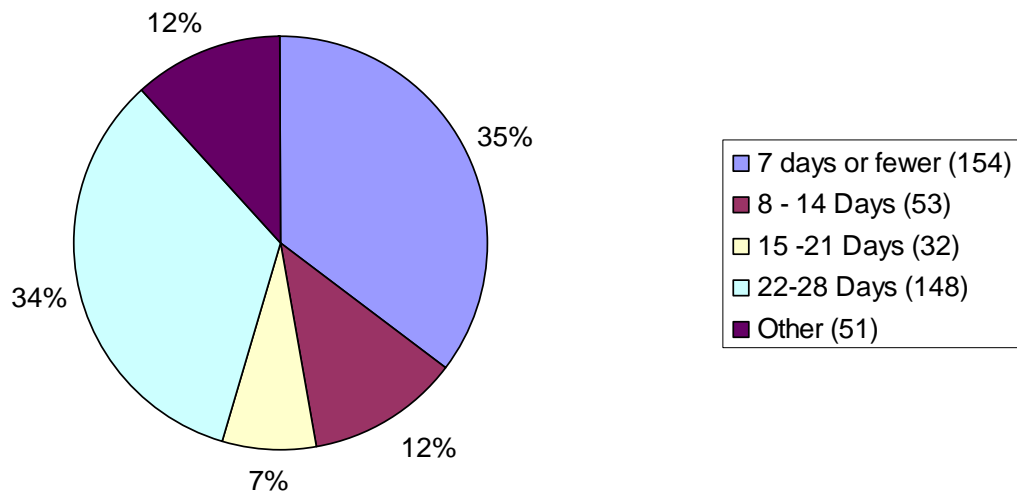
### **Festival broadcasts (54)**

As with sports event broadcasts there was a very slight decline in the number of S-RSLs issued to festival broadcasts in 2008 – 54 compared with 50 in 2007. Many of the annual events issued licences in the past continue to apply for S-RSLs. These include Festival of Flowers in Lincolnshire, Glastonbury Festival and the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire.

### **Other Reasons (25)**

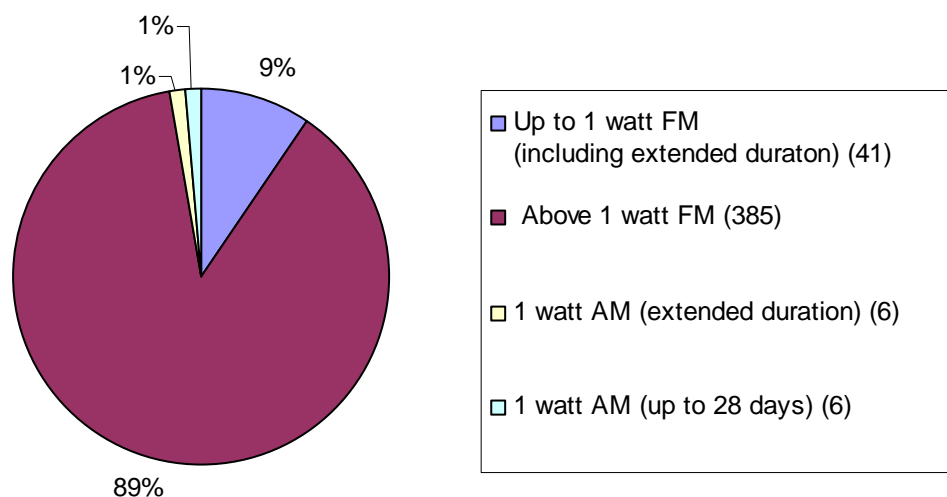
In 2008 the percentage of licences issued to services which did not fall into any other category remained constant. This includes drive-in movies, charity fundraisers, dog agility meets and also commercial trials of which there were two in 2008, for services trialling prior to launch on digital platforms.

**Figure 3: S-RSL licences issued in 2008 by duration**



Applications for broadcasts of seven days or fewer were most common, followed by longer broadcasts of between 22 days and the normal maximum of 28 days. The 'other' category in the chart above includes the exception made for broadcasts for Ramadan and Eid which together last 32 days, as well as the extended duration RSLs which can be used for up to 28 non-consecutive days over a period of up to a year. This is commonly used for sporting events at the same venue which may be part of a series such as football fixtures or motor sports.

**Figure 4: S-RSL licences issued in 2008 by waveband and power level**



There are five categories of S-RSL for the purposes of tariff setting and management. The vast majority of licences issued fall under the 'above one Watt FM' tariff which in practice sees power allocations from five to 25 watts depending on what is required to provide the required broadcast area. Services broadcasting on a maximum power of one watt on FM are commonly either drive-in movies or in-stadia broadcasts. The latter includes, for example, a

service at the Wimbledon tennis championships. The 'one watt AM (extended duration)' category is used at motor sport venues and football clubs, for example, to license broadcasts which take place on different dates throughout the year.

## Section 4

# Long-term Restricted Service Licences (L-RSLs) in 2008

The number of stations broadcasting under a long-term RSL in 2008 was 98. During the year we issued 10 new licences. This consisted of six renewals (licences may be renewed at the end of the five-year licence period) and four new services. Of the new services, two are at technology colleges, one in Cumbria and one in Cornwall; one is Traffic Radio which provides travel and traffic information for visitors to the Birmingham NEC; and one is a BFBS Gurkha service at Beacon Barracks in South Wales.

The L-RSL services can be broken down as follows:

- 48 of the licences are held by educational establishments;
- 37 are at hospitals;
- 11 are on military bases;
- One is a tourist information service; and
- One is a traffic and travel information service.

One L-RSL hospital service, Hospital Radio Plymouth, won Station of the Year at the National Hospital Radio Awards in 2008. This group has been broadcasting in one form or another since the 1960s and has held its AM licence since 1999. Another award-winning station which is licensed as a long-term restricted service is URN, a student service at the University of Nottingham which won Best Student Radio Station and Best Technical Achievement at the 2008 Student Radio Awards.

Four of the services operated under L-RSLs at military establishments are run by the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) Gurkha Radio service, which provides services in Nepali and Hindi to service personnel and their families.

Attached at Annex A is a map showing the location of long-term RSL services, and the nature of those services, broadcasting throughout the UK. The majority of services operate on AM (medium wave) frequencies, although there are also some services on FM, and some broadcast via an induction loop system<sup>1</sup> (identified as 'IL' on the map at annex A).

In addition to the services detailed above, some prisons and other penal establishments run radio services for inmates. Due to the Crown Exempt status<sup>2</sup> of such establishments they are not required to hold licences. However, they apply to Ofcom in the same way as other applicants, so that we may clear an appropriate frequency for their use.

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<sup>1</sup> A network of small loop transmitters, each broadcasting an AM frequency, which are enclosed within the walls of buildings and deliver a signal within those buildings only.

<sup>2</sup> The situation whereby an establishment with Crown status (generally government bodies) is not bound by Acts of Parliament.

## Section 5

# Audio Distribution Systems Restricted Service Licences (ADS-RSLs) in 2008

The RSL Notes for Applicants were updated in August 2007 to reflect this new type of RSL, which is issued for broadcast services using spectrum outside the 'traditional' broadcast bands (i.e. FM and AM).

A trial was operated before the ADS-RSL was introduced, and eight companies operated services during the trial period at a range of different venues, including major sports stadia. These radio services typically offer commentary and other information for attendees within a stadium or venue, on specially-designed radio receivers for sale at the event (as they do not use standard broadcast frequencies).

During 2008 one application was received, for a service at Barnsley Football Club in South Yorkshire. It provides commentary on Barnsley's football matches for spectators at the ground.

The total number of ADS-RSL holders at the end of 2008 was four. These are: Arsenal Football Club (for The Emirates Stadium), The O<sub>2</sub> Arena and Sound Decisions (a company which operates ADS services at various locations) in addition to Barnsley Football Club. At the time of writing this report (March 2009) the number of ADS-RSL operators has risen to six, as Crescent Comms Ltd, which operates 'Ref Link' services<sup>3</sup> at rugby matches in various locations, and Warwickshire County Cricket Club, were both issued licences in early 2009.

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<sup>3</sup> A service which enables spectators to listen to referees during a match.

