



People with learning disabilities and communications services

Qualitative
research report
Publication date: 24 November 2008

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Section 1

Executive Summary

- The findings of this report are based on a series of 'qualitative' interviews with people with learning disabilities. While qualitative research was the most appropriate methodological approach for this study (as it seeks to identify the range of views, opinions and experiences of people), it is important to bear in mind that it utilises a small sample that was chosen specifically to ensure representation of a full range of views within the sample. Qualitative research is designed to be illustrative and does not look to produce statistics. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the research findings.

1.1 Access to communications services

People with learning disabilities who took part in the research faced a range of barriers when accessing communication services

- Low levels of literacy, numeracy, and/or problems with short-term memory limited their access to communication services. This was, in part, due to communication devices' complexity (e.g. mobile phone) and to the fact some relied on a text-based interface (e.g. computer keyboard).
- Participants often had a physical or sensory impairment (e.g. speech, visual, or mobility impairment) as well as their learning disabilities. This also affected their access to communications services. As a result, some findings in this report are similar to other qualitative research with people with disabilities conducted by Ofcom.
- Despite the barriers that they faced when accessing communication services, participants had found ways of working round them. They often seemed to accept these limitations. In many cases, they had grown accustomed to relying on help and support from others (e.g. relatives, support workers). This acceptance might also be accounted for by their lack of awareness of how they could benefit from using communication services.
- The severity of the learning disability was not always the most differentiating factor when it comes to accessing, using, and paying for communication services. Other factors such as access to support, age and income had a significant impact on participants' access to communication services. Indeed, in line with other research conducted by Ofcom and Ipsos MORI, mobile phone and internet use were far more common among younger participants than older participants. Lack of money was also commonly mentioned as a reason for not having a particular service (e.g. a mobile phone, a computer with internet access).

1.2 Use of communications services

Television was the most commonly used communication service

- Participants found the television easy to use and watch. It presented fewer barriers to access than phones or the internet, and required comparatively less effort.
- Although most participants found the television easy to use, a handful struggled when using multi-channel TV, the remote control, and the TV guide. For many, flicking through the channels was the only way to find out what programmes were on. Others relied on their memory to remember channels on the remote control. Most could not read the on-

screen text. However, these difficulties did not prevent participants from watching television. Instead, it prevented them from using it to greatest effect and from taking advantage of the various features on offer.

- Participants' favourite TV programmes included soaps (e.g. EastEnders, Coronation Street), sport and music programmes, because of the entertainment they provided them with. Unlike the news, in which they were generally not interested, and in some cases found upsetting, these programmes did not require too much concentration or prior knowledge on the part of the viewer.

Telephone was most important for maintaining social networks

- Participants all had access to a landline in their home and/or a mobile phone. These provided an important means of keeping in contact with friends and family, particularly among those living away from their parents and siblings. In this respect, they did not differ from the rest of the population.
- However, mobile phones provided more barriers to use than landlines, due mainly to the perception that a large number of features were non-essential, their smaller size, and the amount of reading required to use them.
- Despite these barriers, young participants often preferred using their mobile phone to make calls because it gave them a greater sense of ownership, independence and privacy. Older participants tended to find the landline easier to use.

The internet was widely perceived as a hobby, rather than a source of information

- The internet was the least commonly used of the three communication services studied. This was due to factors such as cost (not only of the connection but of computers too), low levels of literacy, a lack of awareness of what one could do with the internet, and parents and carers associating the internet with potential dangers.
- Participants who used the internet were generally younger. They used it mainly for entertainment, such as looking up pictures of their favourite celebrities and animals, meeting people on social networking sites (although very rarely meeting online friends in person), downloading music, and – more rarely – looking up information and e-mailing friends and family. Few used it for work or study. Most were unaware of the large potential of the internet, and how they could benefit from using it. This may explain why many did not feel inconvenienced by the barriers that they faced when accessing the internet.

1.3 Paying and dealing with suppliers

Checking bills and dealing with suppliers was usually done by relatives or support workers

- Most participants struggled to understand their bills. Those who lived in shared accommodation would rarely check if the share they were asked to pay was right. Some never dealt with bills, because someone else was responsible for paying them.
- Most participants found it difficult to monitor costs for telephone services, because they varied from one bill to the next. Costs for pay-TV were easier to handle because they were constant from month to month.
- When a supplier needed to be contacted, this was usually, though not exclusively, dealt with by someone else. Most participants who contacted suppliers directly (e.g. for their landline) were satisfied with the service they received.

Most participants paid for services over the counter and with cash

- This method of payment was found to be more reassuring because the bill was stamped or a receipt was issued, a proof of payment that would not be provided if paying over the phone or online. For this, participants relied on post offices and local shops.
- Many participants had difficulties managing their money, and/or did not have a bank account. As a result, the ease of managing bills and the suitability of the method of payment mattered more to them than getting value for money. As such, many participants preferred to pay for services before using them (e.g. PAYG), rather than facing a potentially unaffordable bill at the end of the month.
- Very few of the participants who had a mobile were on a contract package. The perception was that PAYG mobiles were financially easier to manage than contract. In addition, as many participants reported losing their phone, using a PAYG mobile made them less likely to be charged for calls they had not made.

1.4 Empowerment

Participants developed strategies to access communication services, but most still needed help from other people

- Participants were able to overcome some the difficulties they faced when accessing and using communications services. Often these solutions involved asking carers, relatives or support workers for help with specific tasks (e.g. reading out a text message, spelling out words to type into the search engine on the internet).

Participants did not know what communication services could add to their life

- Most were unaware of how they could benefit from accessing communication services, and how existing services or technology (e.g. voice recognition, Telephone Preference Service, screen reading software) could facilitate their access or improve their experience. Many participants said they were annoyed with nuisance/cold calls, but only one had registered with the Telephone Preference Service. Participants relied on other people showing them features, software or technology that could empower them.

1.5 Consumer protection

The research did not show evidence that participants were victim of scams. However, it showed that they often 'put up with' services of poor quality.

- The research did not show strong evidence that participants were prone to scams. This could be accounted for by the buffer role played by relatives, carers and support workers, who took responsibility for choosing and dealing with suppliers, and checked that bills were being paid. It is also possible that some participants did not realise that the service they received was not adequate.
- Indeed, many participants appeared to put up quietly with issues that others would not tolerate, such as watching blurred images on their television or having to memorise their relatives' phone numbers because the phone book is not user-friendly. A lack of awareness of what constitutes acceptable service made participants more likely to experience poor quality of service without realising it.

Section 2

Objectives and methodology

2.1 Introduction

Under the Communications Act of 2003, Ofcom (the Office of Communications) must have regard in performing its duties to the needs of persons with disabilities, of the elderly and of those on low incomes.

In June 2008 Ofcom commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct research with people with learning disabilities, exploring their access to, and use of, communication services. This report details the findings of the research.

2.2 Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

- Explore how people with learning disabilities use communications services. This includes looking at ownership, and at the decision-making process for choosing suppliers;
- Identify any existing barriers that people with learning disabilities experience in their use of, and access to, communications services and content; and
- Identify areas where these consumers may be more 'vulnerable' than others – for example dealing with suppliers, billing issues, making complaints.

2.3 Methodology

To meet these objectives, a qualitative methodology was felt to be the most appropriate approach. Qualitative research is a dynamic process; it not only seeks to establish what people know and do, but also their reasons for doing so.

The research included 27 face-to-face depth interviews and 8 ethnographic studies with people with learning disabilities across the UK. The research started with a pilot of 8 depth interviews, which tested out the recruitment material and the topic guide. As a result of the pilot findings, some additional recruitment quotas were set (see paragraph 2.4). Some minor changes were also made to the topic guide, the final version of which is appended at the end of this report.

The definition of learning disability adopted for this project was based on the following three internationally accepted criteria¹:

- Intellectual impairment;
- Social or adaptive dysfunction, i.e. difficulties with communicating, understanding, learning and remembering new things, and in generalising any learning to new situations; and

¹ See www.bild.org.uk

- Early onset, i.e. a lifelong condition that is present from childhood. This means that the research excluded people who have developed cognitive difficulties later in life as a result of an accident, adult disease or illness, or dementia.

People with dyslexia were not included in the research, because it was considered that the issues faced by people with dyslexia were likely to be quite different from issues faced by people with other types of learning disabilities.

2.4 Recruitment

Participants for the research were recruited using a combination of methods:

- Third sector organisations;
- Local disability support groups; and
- Networking and free-finding.

This combination of approaches was necessary because only a small proportion of the population has learning disabilities², making this group comparatively more difficult to recruit. This combination of approaches helped to achieve the quotas set for the recruitment.

To be eligible for the research, participants needed to be aged 18 or over, to have had a learning disability since their childhood, and fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- Uses a mobile phone;
- Watches TV at home; and/or
- Uses a computer with an internet connection.

In addition, quotas were set on a number of variables to ensure a good range of people would be recruited: age, gender, severity of learning disability (mild/moderate/severe³), geographical location, literacy, control over money, and household situation (whether the person is living independently or not). These quotas enabled the research to capture the full range of experiences that people with learning disabilities may have when using communication services.

The classification into mild/moderate/severe learning disabilities was based on participants' self-assessment. When a carer or family member was present at the interview they were also asked for an assessment of the participant's learning disability. No discrepancies between participant's and the carer's assessments were observed.

² According to Mencap, 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability, i.e. about 2.5% of the population.

³ Note that people with profound learning disabilities were not included in the research.

2.5 Sample structure

	Quotas	Achieved sample profile
GENDER		
Male	at least 15	17
Female	at least 15	19
AGE		
18-29	at least 12	15
30+	at least 22	21
SEVERITY		
mild	at least 20	22
moderate	at least 9	10
severe	at least 4	4
LITERACY		
can read	at least 5	11
needs help or cannot read	at least 25	25
CONTROL OVER MONEY		
has control over their money	at least 15	17
no control	at least 15	19
HOUSEHOLD SITUATION		
living independently	at least 15	14
not living independently	at least 15	22
LOCATION		
England	n/a	14
Scotland	n/a	7
Wales	n/a	7
Northern Ireland	n/a	8

Some participants had a physical disability in addition to their learning disability. These included speech, visual, hearing, and mobility impairments, and problems with dexterity. This is in line with other research conducted, which showed that people with learning disabilities are more likely to have a long-term illness or another disability than other people.⁴

2.6 Fieldwork

Participants were offered the opportunity to take part with a friend if they wanted to. In total, 4 of the depth interviews were paired. As well as making the interview less intimidating for participants, paired-depths provided a level of interaction that was otherwise not possible, with participants being confronted with each other's responses and experiences.

Carers (including parents) and support workers were welcome to attend the interview if requested to do so by the participant. This was the case in 14 depth interviews. When a carer was present, the questions were always targeted at the person with learning

⁴ Adults with learning difficulties in England 2003/4, National Statistics & NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre (2004)

disabilities, but carers were given the opportunity to respond to the questions that the respondent could not answer. Indeed, some respondents found it hard to reflect on why or how a decision had been made in the past. This can be accounted for by a short memory span and/or limited cognitive abilities. When this happened carers/relatives were asked for their views.

The ethnography studies included filming participants over many hours, observing them using communications services in different locations, at home (often with their relatives), but also outside their home, at a day centre with their peers, or with support workers. This enabled us to capture how the change of environment impacted on access to, and use of, communications services. Such differences would not have been captured otherwise. A film based on the ethnographic studies has been produced for Ofcom, and the key ethnographic findings are also included in this report.

2.7 Interpretation of findings

While qualitative research was the most appropriate methodological approach for this study (as it seeks to identify the range of views, opinions and experiences of people), it is important to bear in mind that it utilises a small sample that was chosen specifically to ensure representation of a full range of views within the sample. Qualitative research is designed to be illustrative and does not look to produce statistics. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the research findings.

Throughout the report we have made use of verbatim comments and case studies to exemplify a particular viewpoint. It is important to be aware that the views expressed in those do not necessarily represent the views of all participants. Where verbatim comments and case studies have been used, some of the respondent's attributes are given (gender, age group, severity of the learning disability).

2.8 Acknowledgements

Ofcom and Ipsos MORI would like to thank all the participants who took part in the research for their time and contribution, as well as their relatives and support workers, who facilitated the fieldwork.

Section 3

Main Findings

3.1 Context

3.1.1 Communication services in the context of people's lives

The daily lives of the participants who took part in the research varied greatly, ranging from working, going to college, attending a day centre, volunteering (including helping people with other disabilities), having family responsibilities, to staying at home. Their daily activities impacted on their access to, and use of, communication services. For instance, participants who were away from their family tended to have a mobile phone to keep in touch, which was less common amongst those who were living with their family.

In addition, some participants were socially isolated. This is in line with other research conducted with people with learning disabilities, showing that almost one in three people with learning disabilities say they do not have any contact with friends. One in twenty have no friends and do not see anyone from their family.⁵ This meant that participants' use of the telephone or the internet to contact their friends or family was, in some cases, very limited.

Finally, many participants had low levels of literacy and numeracy. This greatly affected their access to and use of communication services, and their ability to check bills and deal with suppliers.

3.1.2 Learning disability and sensory or physical impairment

As mentioned earlier in this report, many research participants had a physical or sensory impairment as well as a learning disability. When asked about their experience with communications services, participants usually took a 'global' approach to their condition, focusing on the outcome (e.g. 'I cannot use a mobile phone') without necessarily identifying the exact cause (the physical and/or the learning disability). This is because participants did not separate their learning and their physical disabilities, and it often appeared that both the learning and the physical disabilities were contributing to the stated outcome.

This means that some of the findings contained in this report mirror those of other studies with people with disabilities conducted by Ofcom. For this reason, although this report focuses on learning disabilities, it is important to remember that any improvement to communications services for visually or mobility impaired consumers is likely to also be of benefit to people with learning disabilities.

3.1.3 The role of the family and carers

Families respond to a relative who has learning disabilities in different ways. They often make judgements on what the person with learning disabilities can or cannot do, on what services or technology may or may not be useful to them, and on what they need or do not need to know or learn. Some participants interacted with communications services very differently depending on whether they were at home or away from home.

Some family members tended to take some responsibilities away from their relative with learning disabilities (e.g. how to switch the computer on/off, how to top up a mobile phone).

⁵ Adults with learning difficulties in England 2003/4, National Statistics & NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre (2004).

Others reported that they did not 'allow' their relative with learning disabilities to perform certain tasks, for fear they could get it wrong.

3.2 Television

3.2.1 Ownership and access

Television was watched by all of the participants and played a major role in the lives of most of them. Unlike other forms of communication, its use was not limited by factors such as speech impairment (which was the case for the telephone) or poor literacy (some participants did have problems reading on-screen text but this did not affect their general viewing). Many participants had grown up with television, which they perceived as part of their everyday life.

Switching the television on and off was not a problem. And, with the exception of those with dexterity problems or poor eyesight, most participants found the remote control easy to use. This was perhaps because they were only using a small number of features, mainly changing the channels and the volume, and they did not know that there were other features available, or did not want to use buttons they were not sure of.

Despite the ease of using the remote control, participants reported a number of problems, such as a blurred screen, and difficulties accessing multi-channel TV when it was first installed in their home. This was usually because they needed time to familiarise themselves with the new remote control.

There's all different coloured buttons on the one I've got and there's numbers as well so I found it really difficult to understand which is what button and the channels. I had trouble with the numbers switching them over, that's all, switching the numbers over, I didn't know which was which, but I know which is which now.

Woman, mild learning disabilities, Wales, 31+

Case study: David

David has lived on his own in a council flat since 2005. He has moderate learning disabilities and has trouble with long words and small font sizes. He is aided in his financial management by a social worker.

David enjoys watching TV, particularly DVDs, and has recently bought a new digital TV with Freeview included. He can't think of anything which he cannot do on the TV, although when the TV was installed the workmen told him to 'not touch the menu' as it was too complicated.

Although David is generally able to use his television, his knowledge of its full functionality is very limited. On the day of the interview, David had bought a new CD player and looked through the user guide tested each of the CD and radio functions. He later said that he didn't understand the instructions but thought he should consult them anyway.

Poor literacy also had an impact on access to television services, but many participants were able to overcome this. For some, surfing through the channels was the only way to find out which programmes were on as they are unable to read the time or the TV guide. This was also true of some participants with short-term memory problems: they flicked through the channels looking for the desired programmes because they could not remember which button to press on the remote control to access the channel they wanted. The on-screen logos of non-mainstream channels were used by many to help them to recognise which channel they were viewing without needing to ask someone else. Several could not read on-screen text, for instance on the news or on some advertisements and would ask a relative what it meant, while others had become used to missing out this information.

Case study: Barry

Barry is in his mid-40s and lives with his partner and their school-aged children in South London. Since birth he has been unable to read or write, and is currently his son's registered carer.

Barry feels strongly that the modern world discriminates against those unable to read and write. He has trouble keeping track of when programmes are on as he cannot read any TV guides. He relies on his family telling him the channel number and time and then he remembers it.

Other problems experienced by participants when watching television resulted from their physical impairment, rather than their learning disability. For example, one of the more common requests from participants was for a larger screen, usually due to problems with their eyesight, or simply because they liked a bigger picture. Similarly, some mentioned that they would like larger remote controls due to problems they have using the buttons. In some instances this was again due to impaired eyesight, but some participants also had problems with dexterity (e.g. because of arthritis, cerebral palsy, etc).

Over time, many participants had developed their own strategies to overcome some of the issues mentioned above. For instance, a few participants said that when their television was not working properly, they would switch it off, as well as other related appliances, unplug them, and plug them in again. Other participants had simply accepted these limitations and had become used to asking their friends and family for help. In many cases, this also meant waiting until there was someone at home who could assist.

I'd ask my daughter or wait for my daughter to come home from school, I wouldn't mess with it, well I wouldn't, well you don't know what you're doing, do you, when you're messing with it, do you? Because you could mess it up and you could have no picture or nothing and I'd ask my daughter, to make sure.

Woman, mild learning disabilities, Wales, 31+

3.2.2 Use

The amount of television watched by the participants varied from person to person, although it was apparent that watching television was something everyone enjoyed. It was common for those who did not live on their own to watch television with their families and housemates, unless they had their own television in their bedroom. Television was particularly important to those who spent much of their day-to-day life at home: it provided them with a view of the outside world (which they would not have access to otherwise, as their low levels of literacy often meant they could not read books, newspapers or magazines), and filled their time successfully.

Very few participants knew how to record programmes, although several had collections of videos and DVDs which they liked to watch. There was no great feeling among the participants that they were missing out by not recording programmes.

As any other members of the general public watching television, participants had favourite shows and viewing habits. They were fans of shows as diverse as *Charmed*, *Crimewatch*, *Question Time*, *X Factor*, *Poirot*, *Sky Sports News*, *Heartbeat* and *Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps*. Three programme genres dominated these favourite shows: soap operas (especially *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*), music and sport. In Wales, the importance of national television and, in particular, programmes broadcasted in Welsh was apparent among two participants living in Welsh-speaking households.

The main reasons given for programme choices were:

- they liked the characters (e.g. The Mitchell brothers in *EastEnders*);
- they liked the plot (e.g. *Poirot*);
- they found them funny; or,
- more rarely, that it gave them a view of other cultures (e.g. documentaries).

Our interpretation is that soaps, music and sport programmes are comparatively easier to follow than other programmes (such as the news and documentaries), offer viewers a form of entertainment that does not require too much effort. People can watch them without

having to worry that they may have missed or forgotten anything from previous shows. The soaps, for example, use the same characters over prolonged periods of time and do not use difficult language. By contrast, participants did not like watching the news, which they found boring, because they could not relate to news items as much as they could relate to soaps, and also because they found the news comparatively more difficult to follow.

A handful of participants who had multi-channel TV said they preferred it to mainstream channels because they gave them greater access to the sort of programmes they liked (e.g. soaps, music and sport).

There was very little content that concerned participants overall, and most felt they understood the programmes they watched. Some said that they had been upset by images of nudity and violence (particularly on the news) being shown on television. When they came across such pictures, they changed channel. Some of these experiences appeared to have been post-watershed. As many participants described scrolling through the channels to find the programme they wanted, or had a tendency to surf through the channels until they found a programme they liked, this increased the likelihood of coming across such images.

3.3 Telecoms – landline and mobile

3.3.1 Ownership and choice of telecoms device – landline or mobile?

Most participants had a landline phone in their home. Those who did not have a landline at home had a mobile phone instead. Many participants had access to both a landline and a mobile phone.

Those that did not own a mobile phone initially stated that they could not see the need for one. Upon probing, it turned out that access was also a key factor: living in a rural area where there is no signal, high costs, speech impairment, and problems with literacy and/or dexterity were all mentioned. This will be explored in the next section.

Mobile phones provided those who owned one with a particular sense of ownership. For several of those interviewed it was the only communication device which they personally owned (even if it was paid for by someone else). Their mobile had a more personal feel than the landline. For some participants, mobile phones were a step towards independence. They could use their mobile phone in private, without other members of the household knowing who they called or texted. In addition, mobile phones provided reassurance to relatives and people with learning disabilities when the latter would go out on their own: they were just a phone call away.

Younger people living with their parents also used more of the functions on their phone, such as downloading music, so for them the mobile was more than just a phone. They also used their mobile phones to play games and to take and store pictures.

Several participants had received their mobile phone as a present from their family and, in one case, from a friend. These gifts were usually made at Christmas or at birthdays. The person receiving the phone was usually able to choose the model but decisions about the network and type of payment (usually PAYG) were made by the person giving the phone, who, in some cases, also took full responsibility for dealing with the supplier (this appeared to be part of the present).

Participants often changed mobile phone, either to get an upgrade or a more fashionable handset – in this respect they did not differ from other mobile phone users who do not have a disability – or because they had lost their handset. Indeed, many participants reported losing their mobile phone, usually due to memory problems.

3.3.2 Use

Like the rest of the population, phones generally played an important part in participants' lives by allowing them to keep in contact with friends and family, and also to contact their support workers, employer and/or place of study (where relevant). In most cases, mobile phones were used for making and receiving calls rather than for text messaging, which was problematic for people with poor literacy skills.

Of the two types of phone (landlines and mobiles), younger generations usually preferred using their mobile, because of the sense of ownership it gave them. Older generations found landlines easier to use, because they had fewer features, which meant fewer opportunities to get something wrong. Cost did not appear to be a great factor in deciding which to use, because participants did not usually know the cost of making calls from a mobile or a landline. Issues such as familiarity with the handset and ease of use (e.g. if the phone number is already on their mobile), were more prevalent in the decision. Most participants thought that mobile phones numbers were more expensive to call than landline numbers, but many could not differentiate a landline number from a mobile number.

3.3.3 Access

The main barriers to access related to the **design of the phones** (particularly mobiles) or the **literacy skills** required to use a phone.

With regards to the design of mobile phones, many found that handsets and buttons were too small, making them challenging to use for people with sight impairment or dexterity problems. In addition, some participants found that mobiles often had many non-essential features, which they did not need and which they found confusing. Finally, although the layout of mobile handsets was broadly similar, the settings and the navigation of functions differed from one handset to another. This meant that when participants got a new mobile they had to spend time and effort learning how to use their new handset. This did not, however, put people off from the idea of getting a new mobile.

Participants with poor literacy found using a mobile phone challenging, because of the amount of text on the screens. Some relatives and support workers who attended the interviews said that handsets with more pictures and symbols would certainly help with this. Few participants used their contacts list in the mobile, either because using it required being able to read people's names, or because they did not know about this feature. Similarly, few participants used their voicemail: they found the automated instructions confusing.

In light of these difficulties, many participants had developed solutions. For instance, some remembered the numbers they used most often in their head rather than looking for them in the contacts list. If they needed someone else's number, they would ask a relative or carer and/or wait until they saw them. Others coped by saving numbers in their mobile phone and then asking people to help them find the right one when they wanted to call it. Again, while these workarounds may sound inconvenient, participants had become used to these ways of doing things and no longer perceived them as a problem.

SMS messaging presented a key problem for people with poor literacy skills or problems remembering, although this did not necessarily prevent them from texting. Some overcame this issue by breaking the text up into manageable pieces and saving their message in drafts if they had forgotten what they were replying to. Others asked their family (sometimes their children) to read out their text messages and respond on their behalf. Although this may sound impractical, participants did not generally perceive it as such: they and their families had become accustomed to such situations.

Case Study: Declan

Declan has Down's Syndrome and lives with his family in Belfast. He has a couple of jobs, clearing glasses at a public house and helping out at the day centre which he visits. He cannot read or write but is fully involved in the choices made about his life, and his family provides him with a strong support network.

Declan has a mobile phone which he uses to call his family. He often gets texts from his sister which other people read out to him. The phone is also important for when his boss rings up about work. He can answer the phone and can recognise his family's names when they call. However, Declan does need help to dial numbers, which people sometimes write down for him to follow. When he receives text messages from people he doesn't know, he deletes them because his sister told him to.

Essentially, participants seemed to adapt well to the limitations that they faced. Younger participants did not perceive the above access issues as problematic: for many of them, a mobile phone was a fashionable thing to own, and whether it was practical or user friendly rarely came into the equation.

At the same time, in those instances where a person's disability, or indeed their financial situation, meant they could not use a mobile phone, participants were generally not that concerned. Mobile phones were not something they had been used to and their perception was that they could easily live without them. A middle-aged participant who could not use a mobile phone because of her poor eyesight and literacy skills did not mind not being able to use one: she had never used a mobile before and did not see what benefits a mobile phone could bring to her life.

3.3.4 Empowerment

One recurring theme through the interviews was participants' lack of awareness of the functionality offered by mobile technology, or indeed some of the services offered by telephone suppliers. For example, some participants mentioned being bothered by unsolicited phone calls but only one of them used the Telephone Preference Service. Similarly, none of the people who had difficulties dialling telephone numbers because of poor eyesight or dexterity used voice recognition or speed dial functions to call friends and family. Overall, many participants were unable to explore the potential of phone technology that could help them overcome some of the barriers that they faced. Instead, they relied on others to tell them about the range of services and technology that could be useful to them.

[My daughter] just bought a phone and when you get a text you press a button and it talks to you...I haven't got one yet...I'll probably end up with her one.

Man, severe learning disabilities, England, 31+

Participants did not usually think of the user guide manuals as a tool that could help them get more out of their phone. Those who looked at them did not find them user-friendly and usually asked someone else to find the information they needed. Although participants did not explicitly request easy read user guides, this might be accounted for by their low expectations of services. Anecdotal evidence from participants, carers and relatives indicates that carefully chosen pictograms and images are always helpful.

Participants who mentioned losing their phone never reported it to their supplier, they simply bought a new one.

Case Study: Mary

Mary is in her 30s, has moderate learning disabilities and lives with her parents in Glasgow. She has short-term memory problems and has a support worker who visits once a week.

Her sister bought her a PAYG mobile phone which Mary uses to keep in touch with her family when she is out of the house. She takes photos and listens to music on the phone, but finds it difficult to text due to her memory problems.

So far she has lost three previous phones (memory problems) but she and her family have never tried contacting her supplier to see if they have been handed in.

Mary tends to learn to use her phone by trial and error. When she gets a new mobile she tries all the features until she knows what they are.

3.4 Internet

3.4.1 Access

Of the three communication services discussed in the research, the internet was the one least likely to be used by participants. This was accounted for by the following four factors:

- **Cost:** many participants were on low income, which is in line with research conducted on disability and poverty.⁶ They could not afford to buy a computer and an internet connection at home, which are comparatively more expensive than free multi-channel TV services or a PAYG mobile;
- **Literacy:** surfing on the web requires some literacy skills;

⁶ According to the Poverty site, 'disabled adults aged 25 to retirement are twice as likely to live in low income households as their non-disabled adult counterparts: 30% compared with 15%'. (<http://www.poverty.org.uk/24/index.shtml>)

- **Concentration:** more concentration and effort are required to use internet compared to watching TV; and
- **Age:** as for mobile phone, interest in the internet was also related to age. Some older participants did not know what the internet was, had never used computers, and were unsure how they could benefit from using the internet. Parents of some of the younger participants were concerned about safety on the internet so chose not to encourage its use.

Participants who used the internet did so in a variety of settings (e.g. college, library, internet café, day centre) although the most common was at home, where they had broadband or wi-fi connections. As could be expected, participants with good literacy skills made greater use of the internet than participants who did not. One person was planning to take a course in web design, and a handful said they often helped their parents use it.

Participants with limited literacy required support to use the internet, for instance to switch the computer on and off, to establish a connection, or to spell out web addresses or words to input into a search engine. However, it appeared that some might be able to do some of these things themselves, if they were shown how to do them. One participant, who had problems reading large sections of text, had used a website that would help her understand and write text as a child, but felt this website was no longer meeting her needs as an adult: its layout and content made it more appealing to children. She now relied on friends to break up their online conversations with her so that she could read the text and then she would reply in the same style.

Case Study: Jack

Jack lives with his parents. He has Asperger's syndrome, combined with mild learning disabilities. He can not read words with more than 6 letters. He goes to college.

His main hobby is playing video games; he also plays games on his mobile phone and sometimes on the internet. His main motivation to access the internet is to find out about new games. He keeps a list of the websites he likes on a paper near the computer, and when he wants to access a site, he copies the address, letter by letter, into the toolbar. He cannot access websites he may have heard of if their addresses are not written down.

He uses [a social networking site] to see his friends or relatives' profiles, and for them to see his. He has been well informed about security and does not use [a social networking site] to get in touch with people he does not know. His sister updates his profile.

Jack has an e-mail address, but he does not actually use it himself. His sister created one for him because he needed an e-mail address to register on some social networking web sites. She checks it for him.

Other participants were limited by their learning disability to the extent that they could only use the internet when assisted by others (family, carers etc), who navigated the pages with them and explained anything they did not understand on screen.

3.4.2 Use

Internet use varied greatly: it was more common among younger generations than among older ones. The amount of reading and writing involved in surfing the internet put off some people: they found it too difficult to make the effort worthwhile.

Frequency of internet use among the participants who had access varied. Some used it once a week, some every other week while others used it every day. They used it for leisure activities such as keeping up to date with their favourite band, celebrity, TV programme (e.g. *Charmed*) or football team (e.g. Celtic FC), looking up pictures (of celebrities, animals), or watching video clips (e.g. YouTube). They were largely unaware of the potential of the internet, for instance for banking, online shopping, or finding information.

A few participants used the internet every day. As well as leisure purposes, they used the internet to look up information on theatre performances, checking flight prices (e.g. Thomas Cook), downloading music (e.g. *iTunes*), or e-mailing/messaging (e.g. *MSN*) friends and family.

Some of the younger participants used social networking sites (e.g. MySpace, Bebo and hi5) to keep in touch with their friends, or in some cases to make new ones. Internet users were aware of the potential dangers of meeting people online as there was no certainty about who they really were.

Case Study: Sean

Sean is in his mid-20s, has mild learning difficulties and some mental health problems. He shares a flat with other people in Belfast. Sean plays the guitar and is studying for an NVQ.

He watches television 2-3 times a week but prefers surfing the internet. He uses the internet every day, for a lot of different things. He downloads music, emails family and friends, and meets new people through social networking sites, although he has never met up with anyone in person after being advised not to by his support worker. He plans to do a course in web design within the next year.

Very few participants had an e-mail address, because of their low levels of literacy. Some said they used to have one but were not using it so their account closed down. Those who had an e-mail address often relied on other people to check their accounts for them, because of their poor literacy. The reason why they acquired an e-mail address was not to communicate with friends and family, but because it was often a requirement to be able to access or register on some websites, e.g. have a profile on social networking sites.

Overall, participants primarily saw the internet as a hobby, a way to keep up-to-date with their interests and a communication service to help them to keep in contact with their friends and family. They did not perceive the internet as a communication service that could empower them, or make some aspects of their everyday life simpler.

Some parents, usually non-users, were concerned with their children using the internet. For them the internet represented a potential danger for people with learning disabilities, who they saw as more vulnerable than other groups of the population. As a result they were reluctant to facilitate or encourage access. Others did not use it themselves and did not see how their children with learning disabilities could benefit from using it. Raising their awareness of the security options available on the internet could help address their concerns.

3.4.3 Empowerment

Participants' awareness of the internet's potential to help with their disability was low: only one person mentioned visiting a website that helped with their disability. People with poor eyesight or poor literacy were not aware of screen-reading software. Many said they did not know what they could do on the internet because nobody had shown them.

Among those who used the internet, many did not know about features such as the 'favourites' option, which could spare them the need to find someone to spell out website addresses for them each time. Again, it appeared that participants often relied on others to inform them about services or features that could empower them in their everyday life. However, their relatives were not necessarily aware of the services or features that could help.

Participants found it challenging to say what could make it easier for them to use the internet. More importantly, they did not see what they would gain out of being able to access the internet more easily. However, literacy appears to be an important barrier, and increasing the use of symbols and images could make the internet more user-friendly.

Case Study: Laura

Laura is in her early twenties, and has mild learning disabilities. She likes using the internet to look for images of her favourite celebrities. She just asks her mum to spell out their names or to write them on a piece of paper, and then she types the letters in the search engine.

Although Laura is comfortable using the internet, she does not know how to switch the computer on and off. When she wants to use the internet, she asks another member of the household to switch on the computer for her. But Laura could not say what is making it difficult for her to do it herself, nor what could make it simpler.

3.5 Suppliers and billing

3.5.1 Choosing suppliers

The decision-making process for choosing suppliers, or choosing what services to buy, was similar to other households. It was generally influenced by the following factors:

- costs and affordability,
- adverts and calls from sales people, and;

- requests from household members (e.g. children).

The choice of mobile phone network largely depended on which network was already used by other household members, as they perceived they would save money by using the same network and benefit from cheaper on-net tariffs. In addition, as mentioned earlier, participants often received their mobile phone as a present, and the choice of the network provider was made by the person buying the present.

Some participants living on their own could not afford pay TV services such as Sky or Virgin, because they were living on low incomes. In instances where cost was an issue, Freeview was seen as a good alternative because it offered extra channels for a one-off payment and did not require a monthly subscription. Some had received their Freeview box as a present from a relative.

Participants living with their parents usually had a say in the decision to buy a new service, but the main income earner usually made the final decision. Those living independently often consulted a support worker as part of the decision making process.

3.5.2 Controlling money

One common problem among participants was difficulty managing their personal finances. Some mentioned falling into debt, and others did not have access to a bank account. Many participants could manage a small amount of money over a short period of time to cover a limited number of items (e.g. for food and/or to top-up their mobile phone for a week), but managing larger sums of money or important expenses was a problem.

[My girlfriend] has control of the finance because it's not done with pound notes like my Dad's day. It's done with credit cards and all that, and writing and filling out forms.

Man, severe learning disabilities, England, 31+

Participants living with their parents or in supported accommodation generally checked and agreed any important or new expenditure with their carer. In some cases, it was reported that the carer would make the final decision. Participants did not usually mind, but one participant in particular was frustrated by his lack of financial independence and felt he should be allowed to manage a larger part of his money, although he acknowledged previous debt problems when doing so.

3.5.3 Understanding billing and getting value for money

Few of the participants could read and understand bills on their own, and most tended to need help from other people; some had never even seen a bill. Participants living with their parents did not see this as an issue. Their parents covered the cost of their living expenses, and they were only responsible for topping-up their mobile phone or paying for their landline calls. However, those in supported living accommodation were paying their own household bills with help from their carer or support worker.

Bills for pay TV and internet packages were relatively simple to monitor, because the amount was usually constant. Landline phone bills however, were more likely to change with the frequency of use and not everyone was able to verify whether or not the call charges were accurate, even if helped by their carer. Some of the respondents had in the past received higher bills than usual but this had been due to excessive use: they expected

their bill to be higher, but did not know how much higher it would be. In one instance the participant moved to a PAYG landline contract as a result.

PAYG mobile phone customers were unable to check to see how much individual calls cost or whether they had made them, because there was no listing of the individual calls. This was not perceived as a problem: those who made little use of their mobile thought that PAYG was a cheaper option than contract phones, and all participants with a PAYG mobile found that it helped them manage their bills. However, it was clear that people do not know how much certain calls cost (e.g. voting in reality TV shows with their mobile) and they may not know much they are paying unless they ask a friend or relative. One participant, for example, found that his PAYG phone was costing increasing amounts to use even though his was making the same number of calls. He contacted his supplier and discovered his was being charged to access mobile internet by the minute, which he was not initially aware of.

Case Study: Anna

Anna is in her mid 30s and has Downs Syndrome. She loves using her mobile phone. She says she texts and calls until she runs out of credit!

Once a week, every Sunday, Anna receives a regular amount of cash from her sister, to cover the costs of her food shopping and top up her mobile. When she tops up, she knows that the top up amount has to last until the following Sunday. She doesn't know how much calls and texts cost, but she checks her balance regularly.

Once Anna used her mobile phone to vote for a show she was watching on TV. She did not realise how much she was being charged, but her sister told her off for doing so and told her it cost a lot of money. Since then, Anna does not take part in voting with her mobile phone.

When asked the difference between a landline and mobile number, participants were often unable to tell. Some thought mobile and landline numbers differed in the number of digits they included. This difficulty in differentiating mobile from landline numbers made it harder for participants to monitor costs. While they knew that mobile numbers were generally more expensive to call they tended not to know if it was a mobile number they were calling.

No participants thought they might be able to get a better deal if they had a contract for their mobile phone, or by choosing an alternative method of payment for their landline such as direct debit. This may be accounted for by their difficulties understanding how much things cost. In addition, participants' prime concern was to be able to pay their bills using a method of payment that they felt was appropriate for them, rather than to get a better deal. The convenience of the method of payment and the ease of managing bills took priority over value for money.

3.5.4 Paying bills

Participants paid their bills in various ways, including

- pre-pay (e.g. for mobile phones);

- in cash at the post office or at a local shop (e.g. for landline), and
- more rarely, by direct debit, set up by a relative or a support worker.

Nobody paid their bills online, over the phone or topped up their mobile at the cash machine.

PAYG phones were a popular choice as they meant it was possible to monitor costs more easily. They were seen to be safer as participants could only use a service as long as they had the money to pay for it, rather than facing a potentially unaffordable bill at the end of the month, with the risk of falling into debt. Given that many participants were on a low income, struggled to keep track of calls, had problems with debts, or were unsure of the costs of the services they were accessing, having the possibility to pay for services before using them was of vital importance.

It's money I have a problem with...It's just much easier for me to pay as you go.

Woman, mild learning disabilities, Scotland, 31+

Being able to pay bills over the counter was also very important to participants. It provided them with a familiar environment, where they knew the shop assistants, felt less anxious about interacting with them, and therefore less likely to get things wrong. In line with this, participants liked to pay their bills in cash, rather than by card or direct debit. This is because many did not have a bank account, and others were not comfortable using debit cards.

When choosing their method of payment, getting reassurance was key. Some participants felt safer paying bills over the counter, because they would get a confirmation that they had paid, for instance a stamp or a receipt:

We go to the Post Office and pay the bill and they stamp it and they tell us to keep the bill safe. They say if anybody come then or anybody phone up you show them the bill, the stamp shows that you've paid it.

Woman, mild learning disabilities, Wales, 31+

Similarly, going to a local shop or post office where the staff knew them was reassuring for participants and their relatives. This limited the potential for things going wrong, or, if something went wrong, it was easier to rectify.

Although participants preferred PAYG phones to contract ones, some reported problems when topping up their phone. These included difficulties identifying the number on the top-up voucher that they needed to dial into their phone, and mixing up the name of the network and purchasing the wrong top-up voucher.

As mentioned earlier, many found it challenging to manage the cost of phone calls, whether landline or mobile. In some instances, parents set-up the direct debit in their own account so as to ensure that their son or daughter did not get into debt. Some also preferred to take responsibility for topping up the mobile phone, as a direct way of keeping control of mobile phone costs.

Case study: Liz

Liz is in her early twenties and has cerebral palsy and learning disabilities. Liz goes to a residential college and relies on her mobile to keep in touch with her family. When she is at college, she calls home many times a day, using her mobile. She loves using her mobile and her parents are concerned about her extensive use.

Liz has never been shown how she could top up her mobile phone. When she runs out of credit, she calls home and her mum tops up for her. Liz's mum feels this solution ensures her daughter does not spend too much money on her mobile.

3.5.5 Dealing with suppliers and complaining

Most participants could not see any reasons for contacting a supplier, but said that if there was a need, their relatives or support workers would do so on their behalf. This is in line with earlier findings showing that carers, relatives and support workers often acted as 'buffers' between people with learning disabilities and suppliers of communications services, on issues such as choice and payment.

A handful of participants had tried to contact a supplier themselves to report a fault or a problem. Most were happy with the outcome. One participant praised his supplier for recording his disability and sparing him the burden of the automated instructions when he called them:

On the [mobile network] the one good thing there was that I was registered as disabled, so as soon as I rang it went through to a separate line and it put me straight in contact with somebody. It didn't go through, press this number, press that number, do this, do that, it put me straight in contact with a person to talk to. And I was, it come up on their computer screen that they was handling someone with a disability and it would say, they asked if it was OK [to record this information on their system] and I said, yeah of course it is.

Man, severe learning disabilities, London, 31+

Although most participants who contacted their supplier said they did not experience any difficulties, one reported getting into some fairly stressful problems. His (contract) phone was stolen and, although he had called his supplier to block the phone, the company did not correctly record this and proceeded to charge him for the calls made by the thief, which amounted to £800. After some lengthy negotiations, which involved the participant, his girlfriend, the police and the supplier, the charges were waived. However, the participant was left very distressed, and decided to change to a different supplier. His girlfriend now pays for both of their phones from her bank account.

Some participants had changed (or considered changing) suppliers, usually for their landline or mobile. Reasons for changing suppliers were fairly standard, focusing on value for money,

and dissatisfaction with the service provided by the existing supplier. For instance, one participant changed network provider for her mobile because she was unhappy with the length of time it took to top up her phone.

It was the amount of time it was taking to top up my phone, it was taking forever. Because I felt like, this is it, I've had enough. So I changed to [mobile network], and they were the quickest people I've ever been with, and they're really good.

Woman, mild learning disabilities, Scotland, 31+

Annex 1

Topic Guide

Timing	Coverage
5 min	<p><u>Introduction and explanation of interview</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Introduce self</u> ▪ <u>Explain purpose of research:</u> <p><i>Looking at how people with learning disabilities use communication services, and any barriers they may experience</i></p> <p><i>By communications services we mean television, telephone (mobile and landlines), and the Internet.</i></p> <p><i>Research conducted for Ofcom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Explain anonymity and ask for permission to record/film</u>
5 min	<p>Warm up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you do during a normal day (at home/at work/elsewhere)?</i> - <i>What do you like to do in your spare time?</i> - CHECK INFORMATION ON IMPACT PROVIDED DURING THE RECRUITMENT WITH THE CARER OR THE DISABLED PERSON, DEPENDING ON WHO ANSWERED THE QUESTION DURING THE RECRUITMENT <i>Before we start, would you mind telling me what learning disabilities [you/disabled person name] have/has? Would you say you/he/she have/has mild, moderate, or severe learning disabilities?</i> <p>RECORD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you need support with? PLEASE FOCUS ON SUPPORT IN RELATION TO LEARNING DISABILITY, NOT ON SUPPORT IN RELATION TO ANY PHYSICAL DISABILITIES THAT THE DISABLED PERSON MAY HAVE</i> <i>Roughly how many hours of care do you need every day?</i>
25 min	<p>Ownership and usage of communications technology</p> <p><u>Television</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Do you watch TV?</i> <p>IF DOES NOT WATCH TV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Is there a TV in your household? IF NO FIND OUT WHY (COSTS, NOT INTERESTED, NO TIME, BETTER THINGS TO DO, WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAMME, HAD PROBLEMS WITH TV IN THE PAST)</i> - <i>IF THERE IS TV IN HOUSEHOLD Are there any specific reasons why you don't watch TV? FIND OUT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE PROBE FOR TOO DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, CANNOT USE THE TV ON THEIR OWN, NOT INTERESTED, NO TIME....</i>

	<p>IF RESPONDENT WATCHES TV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Roughly, how much TV do you watch every day? What do you watch on TV? Why do you watch these programmes?</i> PROBE FULLY SO WE CAN SEE HOW FAR THEY VALUE TELEVISION, WHAT THEY GET FROM IT ETC. - <i>Do you have Sky, Virgin, Freeview? Did you choose this one? Why did you choose this one? IF NO – Who did?</i> - <i>Which TV channels can you watch/are available on your TV? Do you have any TV channel packages – like the ‘movie package’ or a ‘sports package’?. IF FILMING ASK RESPONDENT TO SHOW YOU THE TV AND HOW IT WORKS. Did you choose this? Why did you choose this? IF NO – Who did?</i> - <i>Which TV channels do you watch most?</i> PROBE FOR SPECIFIC CHANNELS. IF RESPONDENT HAS SKY/VIRGIN/FREEVIEW, FIND OUT IF THEY ACTUALLY USE IT, AND IF THEY PREFER MAINSTREAM TV CHANNELS OR SKY/VIRGIN/FREEVIEW. - <i>How easy or difficult do you find it to use a TV? FIND OUT WHAT THEIR ABILITIES ARE. Are there any things you would like to be able to do with the TV and which you can’t do yourself? What are these? What difference would it make to you if you could do these things yourself without needing to ask for help?</i> - <i>Do you sometimes have problems with using the TV? What are they? What do you do when they happen?</i> IF APPROPRIATE ASK ABOUT READING THE USER (PROGRAMME) GUIDE. - <i>What could make it easier for you to be able to watch TV? If you could change one thing about your TV, what would it be – different channels, more programmes about certain things, larger TV? What difference would this make to you? IF APPROPRIATE What could help you overcome the difficulties you have mentioned?</i> PROBE FOR REGULATIONS, IMPROVEMENTS TO DESIGN OR TECHNOLOGY, REMOTE CONTROL AND USER GUIDE USING MORE PICTURES AND SYMBOLS AND LESS TEXT...IF FILMING ASK RESPONDENT TO SHOW WHAT AN IMPROVED DESIGN WOULD BE LIKE - <i>Do you record programmes from your TV? IF YES How do you do this? IF RESPONDENT MENTION DVR (Digital Video Recorder) SUCH AS SKY+ OR V+, ASK How easy or difficult do you find it to use DVR? What exactly do you do with it?</i> PROBE FOR PAUSE TV, FAST FORWARD THROUGH THE ADS. IF THEY DON'T USE THESE OPTIONS, FIND OUT WHY (E.G. NO NEED TO, OR DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO THESE THINGS). <p><u>Telephone</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What about the telephone? Do you have a mobile? A landline/home phone?</i> <p>IF HAS A MOBILE PHONE ASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What do you use your mobile for?</i> PROBE: TEXTING, WATCHING TV, TAKING PICTURES, CALLING FRIENDS, FAMILY, WORK. <i>Are there any of these things you cannot do very well or find difficult to do with your</i>
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mobile phone – such as sending texts, taking photos FIND OUT WHAT THEIR ABILITIES ARE *Can you do all the things you want to do with your phone?* IF NOT ASK *What is it that you cannot do? Why? What difference would it make to you if you could do this?*

- *How was it when you got your first mobile phone? Did you need help using it? What for? Where did you get this help from? Have you changed your phone lately? How easy or difficult was it to learn to use a new phone?* IF APPROPRIATE ASK ABOUT READING THE USER GUIDE
- *Have you ever bought anything for your mobile by using your mobile phone – for example a new ringtone or a new game for your mobile? Did you get the game or ringtone? If not, what happened – did you complain or tell anyone about this?*
- *Do you ever enter quizzes or vote for things on TV programmes like Britain's Got Talent, Pop Idol or Big Brother - by sending a text message or calling in? How often do you do this? What happens? If not enter why not?* MODERATOR: BE CAREFUL NOT TO POSE THIS AS A POTENTIAL PROBLEM
- *Do you ever receive text messages from people you don't know? How often does this happen? What do you do about this – do you reply to them or delete them or something else?*

IF DOES NOT HAVE A MOBILE PHONE ASK

- *Why don't you have a mobile?* TRY TO FIND OUT REASONS E.G. TOO EXPENSIVE, NO NEED FOR IT, ACCESS PROBLEMS, LOST OR GOT STOLEN, HAD DIFFICULTY WITH IT IN THE PAST, FEAR...
- *Does this limit what you can do in any way? How? Why do you say this?* PROBE FULLY.

ASK ALL WITH HOME PHONE/LANDLINE

- *Who do you call from your home phone? Who calls you on your home phone –Which phone do you use more – your mobile phone or your home phone? Why?*
- *How easy or difficult do you find it is to use a telephone? What problems do you face, if any? How do you handle these problems?*
- *What could make it easier for you to use a telephone?* IF HAS A PHONE ASK *If you could change one thing about your phone, what would it be?* **IF APPROPRIATE** *What could help you overcome the difficulties you have mentioned?* PROBE FOR THINGS LIKE BETTER REGULATIONS, IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DESIGN AND LAY OUT OF TELEPHONE, USER GUIDE MORE USER FRIENDLY, TELEPHONE KEYS USING MORE IMAGES AND SYMBOLS AND LESS TEXT?

ASK ALL WITH MOBILE PHONE OR/AND LANDLINE

- *Do you know if you are calling a mobile number or another person's home phone or landline number? How would you tell which is which?* BE SENSITIVE IN THE WAY YOU ASK THE QUESTION. IT SHOULDN'T BE PERCEIVED AS A TEST
- *If there is an emergency (e.g. fire, health, police), would you know what number to call?* FIND OUT IF RESPONDENT IS AWARE OF EMERGENCY NUMBERS LIKE 999.

The Internet

- *Is there Internet access in your home?*

IF NO, ASK WHY (COST, INSTALLATION AND SET UP TOO DIFFICULT, NO NEED FOR IT, DOES NOT HAVE A COMPUTER...).

- *Do you use the Internet?*

IF USES THE INTERNET

- *Where do you go to access the internet? Is that at home or elsewhere (such as a library, club, place of study, or work)? How easy is it for you to get there, and how do you find this?*
- *IF AT HOME What kind of connection do you have? PROBE FOR DIAL-UP, BROADBAND, WIFI. How do you find this? PROBE FOR SPEED OF CONNECTION AND PICK UP ON THIS POINT WHEN REFERRING TO WHAT THEY USE THE INTERNET FOR E.G. DOWNLOADS ETC.*
- *What do you use the internet for? PROBE FOR WORK, STUDY, OR LEISURE, SENDING OR RECEIVING E-MAILS, MAKING FRIENDS, SURFING, BANKING, BUYING THINGS, COMPARING PRICES, FINDING INFORMATION ETC.*
- *What sites do you regularly visit? How did you find out about these? What do you get out of visiting these sites?*
- *How often do you use the internet? How much time would you say you spend online each day/week?*
- *Do you use the Internet for social networking, e.g. Facebook, MySpace, bebo? How often? When did you start doing this? And who do you interact with online? PROBE FOR WHETHER IT IS PEOPLE THEY KNOW IN REAL LIFE OR WHETHER THEY USE THIS AS A MEANS OF EXTENDING THEIR SOCIAL CIRCLE i.e, SPEAKING TO PEOPLE THEY DON'T KNOW.*
- *How easy or difficult do you find it to use the Internet? Can you do all the things you want to do with it? What do you do if you have a problem or a difficulty?*
- *Does anyone help you to use the internet – who helps you and in what way do they help? Do you need help all the time – or just sometimes, explain what situations you might need help i.e. buying things over the internet, general surfing, sending emails?*
- *Do you sometimes receive e-mails from banks you don't bank with? IF YES: What do you do when this happens? Do you have an example you can tell me about?*
- *Are there any things you cannot do yourself on the Internet, perhaps things you need help to do at the moment? FIND OUT IF THERE ARE THINGS THAT RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO DO BUT FIND TOO DIFFICULT OR ARE WORRIED ABOUT DOING ON THEIR OWN E.G. PAYING BILLS, BANKING ONLINE, DOWNLOADING MUSIC OR FILMS, BOOKING TICKETS, WATCHING TV. NOTE: WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THINGS THAT THEY CAN'T DO BECAUSE THEIR CONNECTION IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH Like what? Why is this? What difference would being able to do these things make?*

	<p>ASK ALL</p> <p><i>What could make it easier for you to use the Internet? IF APPROPRIATE What could help you overcome the difficulties you have mentioned? PROBE FOR THINGS LIKE BETTER REGULATIONS, IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DESIGN OF COMPUTERS/KEYBOARDS/MOUSE, ISSUING MORE GUIDELINES FOR WEB DESIGNERS ON ACCESS, MAKING ALL PUBLIC SECTOR WEB SITE MORE ACCESSIBLE...</i></p>
<p>15 min</p>	<p>Decision making e.g. choosing suppliers and packages, paying bills How are decisions made and by whom? Ease of understanding? Confidence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Your situation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CHECK INFORMATION PROVIDED DURING RECRUITMENT <i>Who has control over your money, is that you or someone else?</i> - <i>Roughly how much money do you receive a week/month?</i> - <i>When a financial decision needs to be made regarding communication services (e.g. buying TV channels, choosing a mobile phone or an internet provider), who decides? Why is this?</i> ▪ <u>Choosing suppliers and services</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Which companies supply your TV/Internet/mobile and home Phone?</i> - <i>How did you choose your current phone/Internet providers? Was it your decision? Did you get any help in doing this?</i> - <i>IF DID NOT CHOOSE – who chose it for you? Do you know if your internet service is provided by the same company that provides any of your other services such as your landline or TV? Did you discuss this with the other person/what sort of things did you discuss – i.e. which channels you wanted to watch, what you use you mobile phone for – mainly texts or mainly calls,</i> - <i>Have you ever switched suppliers? Why? What happened? How easy was it? Have you noticed any changes since switching?</i> ▪ <u>Bill payments and packages</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Are they easy to understand? Why do you say this?</i> - <i>Is it clear from your bills what services you are paying for? Why do you say this? What aspects are/are not clear?</i> - <i>Do you ever have problems with bill payments? Examples?</i> - <i>Are your bills what you expect? Do you ever feel your bills are inaccurate? If you do, what do you do about it?</i> - <i>What, if anything, would help you to better understand/manage your bills?</i> <p>PAYING MOBILE PHONE BILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>And how do you pay for your mobile phone? PROBE FOR CONTRACT OR PAY AS YOU GO.</i> - <i>IF CONTRACT ASK: Roughly, how much does your bill cost each month? Have you ever had a surprisingly high bill – what caused this? What did you do about it? What are the circumstances that lead to this?</i> - <i>Why did you decide to get a contract? How did you choose which supplier</i>

	<p><i>and tariff would be best for you? Was the information about this easy to understand? Did you need help? Where did you get this from?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>IF PAY AS YOU GO ASK: Why did you decide to get a pay as you go phone? FIND OUT REASONS, E.G. DO NOT HAVE A BANK ACCOUNT SO CANNOT GET CONTRACT, LIMITED USAGE, FEEL BETTER OFF WITH PAY AS YOU GO... How often do you need to top up your phone? Where do you get the vouchers from? Any problems ‘topping up’ your phone. How much do you think you spend on your mobile every week/month? Do you think it would cost this much if you were to get a monthly contract or would a monthly contract phone be cheaper or more expensive?</i> <p>INTERNET BILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How do you pay for your internet connection? Roughly, how much does it cost you a month? Is the bill always what you expect? Why is this?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Accessing information and making complaints</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Have you ever tried to contact one of your service providers about something? Was this over the phone or did you go to a shop? FIND OUT IF THEY FEEL THEY GET A DIFFERENT SERVICE WHEN CONTACTING PEOPLE FACE-TO-FACE OR ON THE PHONE. IF CHOSE ONE METHOD OF CONTACT AS OPPOSED TO THE OTHER PROBE WHY - CUSTOMER SERVICE REASONS – IE EASIER TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE FACE TO FACE/OR VICE VERSA?...</i> - <i>IF YES How did you contact them? Why did you contact them? Information? Complaint? What happened?</i> - <i>IF NO Have you ever wanted to contact your service provider but felt unable to?</i> - <i>Can or has anyone else contacted a supplier on your behalf to make a complaint – what happened?</i>
<p>5 min</p>	<p>Content NOTE: THIS IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT SECTION. IF YOU ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME THE OTHER SECTIONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Main news sources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Do you ever watch news programmes? Which programmes/channels/websites? IF FILMING Can you show me?</i> - <i>What is it you like/dislike about them?</i> - <i>How do you feel about on-screen text? EXPLAIN ON SCREEN-TEXT IF NECESSARY</i> - <i>Do you feel you generally understand the programmes you watch? What kind of programmes do you feel you understand most/least? Do you ever have to ask someone else what people mean on TV because you don't really understand the way they are saying things? Do you have any examples? How often do you feel you don't really understand what is happening or being said on news programmes?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>What changes, if any, would you like to make to news programmes? Why do you say this? What difference would it make?</i>▪ <u>Competitions and voting</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Do you ever take part in competitions or voting using a telephone or the Internet? Which ones? Why is this? IF NOT PROBE FOR REASONS (NOT INTERESTED, WOULD NEED HELP TO TAKE PART, DOES NOT UNDERSTAND HOW TO TAKE PART ETC)</i>- <i>How easy or difficult is it for you to take part?</i>- <i>How do you find out about them? Is there a regular channel/website that you visit?</i>
5 min	Summing Up <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>Summary of interview</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">- What do you like/dislike about TV/Internet/Phones?- What is your biggest concern about using TV/Internet/Phones?▪ <u>Final thoughts</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is there anything you would like to add?