
Television channels required to provide access services in 2022

Statement:

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About this document

This document explains which TV channels licensed by Ofcom are required to provide access services (subtitles, signing and audio description) on a proportion of their programming in 2022.

Access services are intended to help people with sensory impairments to understand and enjoy TV programmes. In 2022, 90 channels will be required to provide access services.

1. Statement

- 1.1 The Communications Act 2003 (“the Act”) required Ofcom to publish a code setting out the obligations of television channels licensed in the UK to provide television access services. Following consultation, Ofcom published the Ofcom Code on Television Access Services (“the Code”) in July 2004, together with an explanatory statement setting out the channels that would be required to provide such services in the following year. A copy of the current version of the Code, incorporating amendments made since the Code was first published, can be found at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0035/179954/tv-access-services-code.pdf.
- 1.2 The Code also provides for a mid-year review of the audience share and revenues of UK-licensed television channels, based on data for the previous year. The purposes of the review are to establish whether, in the next calendar year, channels should be:
- a) required to provide television access services;
 - b) required to meet a different level of provision; or
 - c) excluded from the requirement to provide television access services.
- 1.3 The statutory targets for broadcasters are expressed as percentages of the service. They rise from a low level to the ten-year targets prescribed by the Act, that is 80% for subtitling, 5% for signing and 10% for audio description. In the case of Channel 3 services (ITV, STV and UTV) and Channel 4, the relevant target for subtitling is 90% and for BBC channels (excluding BBC Parliament which is exempted on audience share grounds) it is 100%¹.
- 1.4 Ofcom has used the cost of providing access services to calculate three levels of provision that we apply to relevant channels:
- a) Level One equates to the full current annual targets for subtitling, signing and audio description, as well as any alternative requirements;
 - b) Level Two equates to 66% of the current annual target for subtitling, as well as 100% of the targets for signing and audio description, and any alternative requirements; and
 - c) Level Three equates to 33% of the current annual target for subtitling, as well as 100% of the targets for signing and audio description and any alternative requirements.
- 1.5 Data collected from broadcasters in early 2021 was used by Ofcom to estimate the costs incurred for the provision of access services. This helps assess whether broadcasters can afford to meet their obligations, by spending no more than 1% of their relevant turnover.

¹ Under the BBC Charter and Agreement, Ofcom has specific duties relating to access services on BBC television and on demand services.

Domestic TV Services

- 1.6 The list of domestic channels required to provide access services in 2022 is at Annex 1. In brief:
- a) 90 channels will be required to provide television access services in 2022;
 - b) 75 channels will be required to provide access services at Level One during 2022 and 15 channels will be required to provide access services at Level Two. No channels will be required to provide access services at Level Three. Subtitling targets are now the highest required under the Code (80%) for most channels, with audio description at the maximum level of 10% for most; and
 - c) over 50 time-shifted services (e.g. ITV2 + 1) and simulcast HD services (e.g. Channel 4 HD) are also required to provide access services.
- 1.7 The statutory target for audio description is 10% from the tenth anniversary of the relevant launch date (normally the date on which a channel started broadcasting). Four broadcasters – the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky – have committed to audio describing at least 20% of their content on their channels.
- 1.8 Finally, the statutory target for sign-interpreted programming is 5% from the tenth anniversary of the relevant date. Channels with a smaller audience share (i.e. an audience share between the audience share and signing thresholds set out in Annex 1 of the Access Services Code) are excluded from the requirement to provide sign interpreted programming. Instead they are required to either:
- a) provide a minimum amount of sign-presented programming between 7am and 11pm every month, subject to the targets shown in Table A below; or
 - b) pay a minimum annual contribution towards alternative signing arrangements approved by Ofcom as also set out in Table A.

Table A: Signing obligations for channels with smaller audience shares

Signing obligations for channels with smaller audience shares (These channels should show at least the amount of sign-presented content set out below unless Ofcom has approved alternative arrangements)		
Anniversary of relevant date	Sign-presented content (monthly)	Minimum annual contribution towards alternative arrangements ²
First	30 minutes	£26,702
Second	30 minutes	£26,702
Third	30 minutes	£26,702
Fourth	30 minutes	£26,702
Fifth	45 minutes	£40,109
Sixth	45 minutes	£40,109
Seventh	60 minutes	£53,515
Eighth	60 minutes	£53,515
Ninth	60 minutes	£53,515
Tenth	75 minutes	£66,920

Non-domestic TV Services

- 1.9 In 2020, 18 channels broadcasting in other European countries ('non-domestic channels'), were required to provide access services. These channels broadcast to Denmark, Republic of Ireland and Sweden. However, following the end of the Brexit transition period, an Ofcom licence can no longer be used to broadcast a service to these countries.

² Ofcom has adjusted these figures to reflect the Consumer Price Index in 2020 being recorded at 1% (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7g7/mm23>). We will again review and, if necessary, update the minimum contribution levels when we publish the annual list of channels required to provide television access services in 2023.

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- 1.10 Ofcom assessed whether any non-domestic channels currently licensed by Ofcom met the criteria to be given a requirement to provide access services, but they did not. Therefore, no non-domestic TV services will have a requirement to provide access services in 2022.

A1. Domestic channels required to provide access services in 2022

Level One (full requirements)		
BBC One	Nick Jr Too	Sky Sports Premier League
BBC Two	Paramount Network	Sky Sports Football
BBC Four	MTV	Sky Sports Cricket
BBC News	Comedy Central	Sky Sports Golf
BBC Scotland	Comedy Central Extra	Sky Sports Action
CBBC	Sky Arts	Sky Sports Mix
CBeebies	Sky Atlantic	Sky Sports Arena
Channel 3 Services (ITV/STV/UTV)	Sky Comedy	Sky Sports F1
ITV2	Sky Crime	Sky Sports News
ITV3	Sky Documentaries	Challenge
ITV4	Sky Witness	Syfy
ITVBe	Sky News	E!
CITV	Sky One	Movies 24
Channel 4	Sky Replay	Movies 24+
4seven	Pick	Dave
E4	Sky Cinema Action	W
More 4	Sky Cinema Comedy	Yesterday
Film 4	Sky Cinema Drama	Alibi
4Music	Sky Cinema Family	Gold
Channel 5	Sky Cinema Greats	Drama
5Star	Sky Cinema Hits	BT Sport 1
5USA	Sky Cinema Premier	BT Sport 2
5Select	Sky Cinema Sci-Fi & Horror	BT Sport 3
Nickelodeon	Sky Cinema Select	
Nicktoons	Sky Cinema Thriller	
Nick Jr.	Sky Sports Main Event	

Level Two (full requirements for signing and audio description; 66% of subtitling)		
Boomerang	Cartoon Network	S4C
CBS Reality	Discovery	Quest
Quest Red	Investigation Discovery	Animal Planet
TLC	Food Network	Really
DMAX	Discovery Turbo	HGTV