

Virgin Media – Statement on provision of electronic programme guides



Virgin Media is committed to transforming the experience for its disabled customers, across all of their interactions with us. Our TV service is a central part of that.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Ofcom Code on Electronic Programme Guides (EPGs) we provide the following information.

About our Horizon TV platform

We have recently launched 'Horizon 4 RDK', the next generation Liberty Global TV platform that is being implemented across the Liberty Global portfolio. Following the recent launch, it is intended that all new TV deployments will be on this platform. 'Horizon' has been designed to allow us to roll out updates on a regular basis, enabling Virgin Media to respond to customer needs and market changes in a much more agile way. This platform was launched to new customers from 7th December and will launch across our existing base during Q1 2021.

Product testing with disability groups

In 2018, Virgin Media held an independent review with the Disability Action Centre (DAC) on the development of the Horizon TV platform. The review sought to investigate whether viewers with a range of impairments and accessibility needs could use the User Interface (UI), including the EPG, on both the set top box and app devices, and ensure we were considering a broader view of accessibility in addition to the requirements set out in the EPG code. The outcome of this review has led to various improvements that Virgin Media has incorporated within the Horizon TV platform. Alongside this, Virgin Media intends to continue to work closely with DAC to gain their support now that the product has launched and carry out further testing to ensure that the platform remains accessible.

Product development and accessibility features

The Horizon platform began development for the UK in (X). Following Ofcom's statement of 27 June 2018, Virgin Media fed the four specific accessibility requirements into the Horizon development team, located in Liberty Global's office in The Netherlands, so that they could be incorporated into the platform's design. The new platform will be adopted by Liberty companies in a number of territories, therefore Virgin Media is one of a number of stakeholders feeding into this product.

We are confident that we will be able to deliver all four features set out in Ofcom's statement of 27 June 2018 on the Horizon platform. As such, we are not currently working to develop alternative steps for the four required features.

Product launch timeline

While it is our intention to provide all four features required under the code, as the Horizon project has been in development since (X) – long before the publication of Ofcom's statement – we will not have the features in place for the platform's launch.

In order to test the efficacy of the new platform, Virgin Media successfully undertook a trial ‘controlled launch’ (X), with the launch to new customers occurring in early December. As mentioned, this platform will launch to our existing base during Q1 2021. Once the platform is available to all customers, as part of our current product roadmap Virgin Media aims to enable all of the four features on the Horizon platform across (X).

At this point in the development of the Horizon platform we are unable to provide any further detail on how we will implement each of the four items. However, we are keen to continue to engage with Ofcom on this very important matter in advance of our next statement.

Virgin Media, December 2020