

Title:

Forename:

Surname:

Representing:

Self

Organisation (if applicable):

Email:

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?:

Keep name confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Ofcom should only publish this response after the consultation has ended:

You may publish my response on receipt

Additional comments:

I have been using the Video Relay Service (VRS) since I started my senior management job. I only have the service for up to 2 hours a week and only on a fixed terminal (my computer which needs to be online). The benefits would be much greater if the service was available full-time and on mobile devices (smartphones for instance) - as people would be able to contact me at any time and I could contact people whenever my work requires it.

Through my experience with the VRS I know how much the quality of my life - and that of my children - would improve if this was routinely available - day and evening. For example, it would enable the school to contact me whenever necessary. Importantly it would give me - and my family - the reassurance that I can contact emergency services if the need arises.

There is no equivalence but through VRS. Text relay services are no better than emails and much more frustrating as communication is slow and stilted - and it alienates callers.

Question 1: Do you agree that NGTR would provide greater equivalence than the existing approved TR service? Do you agree that we have considered an appropriate range of improvements:

Yes it would provide greater equivalence as the lack of speed is one of the main problems but not enough. It is vital that providers of NGTR (including the infrastructure providers) are incentivised to provide the most up-to-date and affordable technological solutions.

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal to implement NGTR through the amendment to GC15? Do you agree that the criteria we propose satisfactorily embody improvements we suggest for NGTR:

Question 3: Do you agree that a period of up to 18 months for implementation of NGTR, following an Ofcom statement, is appropriate:

This seems to me a very long time - especially given that everything is in place already to start it going.

Question 4: Do you consider that the requirement to ensure equivalent services for disabled end-users would require a mandated VR service in some form for BSL users? Please indicate the basis of your response:

Yes absolutely - from my personal experience with VR this would tackle one of the key barriers that deaf BSL users face. It would promote far greater inclusion of people like me. I would also like to emphasise that my written English is of a high standard, yet Text Relay or NGTR would in no way match the experience of using VRS because of the speed and the level of interaction between me and the other party on the line.

Question 5: Do you agree that a restricted service would be more proportionate in providing equivalence for BSL users than an unrestricted service:

Frankly, I find it offensive that it is deemed 'proportionate' that deaf people have limited access to a service that would be a massive step forward in reducing economic and social exclusion of deaf people and their families.

Question 6: Please provide your views on Methods 1 ? 5 for a restricted VR service discussed above. Are there any other methods that are not mentioned that we should consider? In making your response, please provide any information on implementation costs for these solutions which you believe is relevant.:

I strongly believe that all proposed methods are inadequate. The proposals do not reflect the real world - deaf people will need different levels of access at different stages of their lives; deaf people may have to make or receive private calls whilst in work; deaf people may need to make calls outside office hours - evening and weekend calls may be necessary to contact emergency services or to speak to family and friends. Importantly the underlying presumption appears to be that VRS only exist for deaf people to make calls; VRS also

enables others to make calls to deaf people.

The only equivalence would be to provide 24/7 access to VRS - and the technology is there, for instance it is possible to use interpreters in New Zealand/Australia which has a similar language during our night-time. Also the logistics is so advanced that providers would be able to determine hours with high/low levels of demand and adapt their level of service.

I also strongly believe that there must be a requirement or incentive for telecommunications providers to ensure that deaf people can use the latest technology at an affordable cost. The benefits would be great - not only would it greatly improve the quality of life of deaf signers; it would reduce our isolation and it would give deaf people real opportunities to get into a job and to progress towards senior positions.

Question 7: Do you agree that a monthly allocation of minutes combined with a weekday/business hours service would be the most appropriate means to restricting the service:

This proposal is perverse - one minute a day is not going to be an 'equivalence'.

Now is the time to be bold and visionary - now is the opportunity to break through one of the biggest barriers and drastically improve the lives of deaf people and their families.

Telecommunications companies can afford the service - it's now up to Ofcom to demonstrate real leadership by making those companies take their responsibility.