

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Arthur

Surname:

Aston

Representing:

Self

What additional details do you want to keep confidential?:

No

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

Additional comments:

During the last 18 months, I have tried several different ways to improve the accessibility of my TV, but I have not been successful. I've had continuous conversations with Sky, my TV platform provider, and I even got myself a Sky Talker, but I am not entirely satisfied with it: the major frustrating aspect is that this only reads out information on the current programme being shown and on the following programme; there is no ability to access and navigate the EPG.

The online form to respond to this consultation is not very accessible; a .doc format would be preferable to a pdf, which sometimes is not readable with a screen reader.

Finally, it's OK for Ofcom to focus on the accessibility of the broadcasting market, however I'd like to say that there's equally a lack of accessibility of DVD players/recorders; even there, TTS would be a great solution.

Question 1:Do respondents agree with Ofcom's initial assessment that apps for mobile devices have the potential to be useful for those people with visual

impairments who feel confident using touch-screen technology and can afford a suitable mobile device? If not, why not? :

Yes. My only hesitation does not regard the ease of using apps, but rather the fact that, most of the times, these apps are not made accessible at the design stage. Working through apps is very helpful, if they're accessible.

Question 2:Do respondents agree with Ofcom's initial assessment that apps for mobile devices are less likely to meet the needs of the majority of visually-impaired people who are 65 or older, both because they are less likely either to own a suitable mobile phone and because touch-screen apps present a number of actual and perceived barriers to use. If not, why not?:

Yes, quite clearly.

Question 3:Do respondents consider that it would be reasonable for visually-impaired viewers to pay more than sighted viewers for the ability to use EPGs or substitutes for the same purposes as sighted viewers? If so why? :

In principle, yes, to some degree: this is a very specialist market, which requires some upfront investment.

Question 4:Do respondents agree with Ofcom's initial assessment that the speaking EPGs integrated into TVs and set top boxes may be easier for people with visual impairments to use than touch-screen apps? If not, why not? :

Absolutely, 100%.

Question 5:Do pay TV service providers such as Sky, Virgin, Talk Talk and BT TV see additional obstacles that would prevent them from committing to including text to speech capabilities in the next planned upgrades to the receivers they offer to subscribers? If so, what are these obstacles? Absent regulation, would these obstacles make it impossible on commercial grounds to commit to the necessary investment?:

I don't see any major justification; the technology is available and requires only to be adapted to the use of TV guides.

Question 6:If the cost of providing speech-enabled receivers to all those who subscribe to particular pay TV services would entail a substantial delay to the roll-out of such receivers to all subscribers, would it be feasible, quicker and more cost-effective to offer suitable equipment first to viewers with visual impairments?:

I think that, in the same way as subtitles are of major importance for deaf users, speaking EPGs would make the lives of visually-impaired people much easier. Therefore, unless

Speaking TVs become a requirement, prioritising the rollout of this technology to blind users is sensible.

Question 7:Do respondents consider that it would be reasonable to expect visually-impaired viewers to pay extra for equipment that allows them to use EPGs or substitutes for the same purposes as sighted viewers? If so, why? :

I think it's a reasonable expectation; I personally don't know of anybody who hasn't tried Sky Talker or any other option to be able to access television content.

The Sky Talker is an example of a product which tried to provide accessibility to blind users, but it only works on Sky and provides only limited information on programming. There is, however, a demand for a universal solution to make television accessible to blind users.

Question 8:Do licensors such as Freesat and Freeview see obstacles to using their leverage to require manufacturers to incorporate speaking EPGs in future versions of products authorised to use their brands, such as Freetime and Freeview Connect?:

I can't see why they should do that; it's clearly not a major technical problem.

Question 9:What are the main types of cost that pay TV service providers would face in incorporating speaking EPG features into the next generation of their set top boxes?:

I doubt there would be any major development cost; TTS capabilities on mobile phones are now becoming the norm, and I don't see how that's different for TV guides.

Question 10:What is the scope for connected platforms to avoid the need for specific TTS provision within consumer equipment by using cloud-based resources (e.g. speech files on a central server delivered to the device as required)?:

That seems to be a good idea, as platform providers would avoid the limitation of speaking EPGs being restricted to Freeview; accessible resources on the cloud would allow blind users to choose between platforms with the same accessibility standards.