

**Title:**

Mr

**Forename:**

Stephen

**Surname:**

Menary

**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:**

No

**I confirm that I have read the declaration:**

Yes

**Additional comments:**

I believe that suppliers of television content could without much cost provide a more accessible electronic program guide (EPG).

As things stand I am able to access websites via my computer or phone that will give me the channels schedule. I have found that the accessible online TV guide from Sky is the most intuitive and easiest to use. But I am still forced to browse the web to find out what is on.

Most companies and especially those providing services for the disabled seem to assume that everyone has access to a smart phone or the internet and have the skills in which to use the service or smart phone applications provided and that those are accessible by screen readers and magnification software (assistive software).

One of the other key issues with this approach is an update to a smart phone application or web page is an update can render them inaccessible to those using assistive software.

I am not an expert but having an option for the EPG to talk seems very possible. I have seen it work in some freeview set top boxes and the Panasonic VIERA smart TV range.

When I have had sighted people browse the EPG on Sky I hear music in the background and in certain sections the audio changes with each listing. I see no reason as to why this can't simply speak if that option is selected.

One of the biggest issues for me would be accessing the extra services that are provided. On demand, red button, recorded shows and pay-per-view ordering like films and sporting events. With Sky they are able to add a pay-per-view event as long as you phone in advance. Virgin media however tell you that the only way to access this is through the box. After having issues with this and having to ask a friend to come over so I could order the boxing I ended up switching away from Virgin Media to Sky. So it was that much of an issue for me.

Sky also released a Sky Talker a few years ago. I bought this system at the cost of £50. The idea was it would announce the now and next information when you switch to that channel. It was poorly designed. The text to speech voice was unintelligible and quiet. It had a built in speaker instead of sending the voice through the TV. I gave up on it after a day.

If a text to speech option is added to EPG's it should come through the TV, have a clear to understand voice and should have options to change the parameters of the voice. Between male and female and the speed of the voice feedback and maybe a set of verbosity options. I have an Apple TV which has built in speech and the option to change between voices and the speed. I find I can hear and understand the male voice better as I have hearing issues and work better with the lower tones.

**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? :**

As long as the developer of the app follows the guide lines for accessibility this works. Apple, Android, Windows and blackberry offer guides for developers on this. links can be found at <http://developer.blindtechsupport.net>

**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, I agree with this statement

**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? :**

I would pay for a service but feel that the big providers like Sky, Virgin and BT can afford to offer these services at no extra cost. Panasonic have added a text to speech service in their tv's at no extra cost stating that "The cost to implement the feature was negligible"

**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? :**

yes, I believe it would. switching between interacting between a phone and your tv adds an unnecessary step.

**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 believe the service in most cases can be added at a software level and could even work with existing receivers. They are able to transmit the information, different visual effects and audio. An update to this system may be able to offer text to speech. If an upgrade to a new receiver is necessary I believe most will take it.

**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?:**

If a specific receiver is required I would have no issue in ordering it, just so long as it is updated and covered under the same warranty as the standard receivers.

**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? :**

If a specific receiver was required I would pay a reasonable amount for it. I feel it should be dealt with in the same way receivers are now. If you are a new customer and there is an offer for a free HD box for instance you should be able to specify a talking receiver in its place. if you have an existing receiver and wish to switch then it would be like upgrading from a standard to an HD, So I would expect to have to pay toward the receiver.

**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 feel it could limit the market in this area. But may be necessary. You can't ask the large manufacturers and providers to offer this service at additional cost and give smaller manufacturers a pass.

**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?:**

licences for text to speech engines. A corporate licence with a company like Nuance could be arranged. Other companies manage this.

**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)?:**

This is the method of implamentation I prefer the most. I believe it would be possible.