

### **Question 1: Which of the three options do consultees favour, and why?:**

I strongly favour Option 2. An increase in audio description to 20% for all channels required to provide access services. Existing levels of audio description are insufficient, many programmes are still broadcast without it, so option 1 is not viable. Given the forthcoming digital switchover, and the availability of a far greater range of channels, option 3 would still make a great number of programmes completely inaccessible to blind and partially sighted people, the vast majority of whom watch TV. This would effectively disempower people with sight problems and further increase the digital divide - those who are able to access TV and those who can't. The needs of blind and partially sighted people should be taken into account with digital advances.

Option 2 is the only option that is fair and that will ensure blind and partially sighted people can benefit from the fullest range of digital TV channels. Increasing AD targets for all broadcasters is clearly the right and only option to take.

I use audio description myself and it makes a huge difference to my enjoyment of programmes. I don't need to have someone with me to explain visual elements of what is happening, nor need I worry that I am missing a detail that is intrinsic to the plot. This is a vital service for me and I would love to see more of it. It makes a huge difference to my life.

### **Question 2: Do consultees have any further suggestions for future access service provision? If so please provide the rationale for these suggestions:**

In order for blind and partially sighted people to be able to fully benefit from digital TV, the number of programmes broadcast with AD should be increased - to 20% and more. Due to cost and logistical implications, this should be introduced gradually so broadcasters can build it into their plans and budgets. Research suggests that there will be increasing numbers of people with sight problems over the next 20 years with a doubling of the number of blind people by 2025. The needs of these people cannot be ignored. Watching TV, one of the most common pastimes in the UK, must be open to everyone so AD levels must be increased.

### **Comments:**

I would urge Ofcom to recommend a doubling of audio description targets to 20% for all broadcasters, but also to only see this as a first step to including everyone in the digital age. Future increases in AD levels must follow!