

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

The BBC is firmly committed to ensuring that its programmes and services are accessible to those with sensory impairments. We therefore already exceed the current 10% quota for audio described programming on all our qualifying channels and we also offer subtitling, signing and audio description (AD) on demand via the BBC iPlayer as well as meeting, or exceeding, our targets for doing so through live broadcasts.

Although we find the evidence from Ofcom's research of increased awareness and usage of AD somewhat disappointing, we do understand that those who use the service value it highly. We also believe that some increase in the number of programmes with AD coupled with some further promotion of the service may increase usage further. We also note that a third of those responding to the consultation who did not use AD said that this was either because they did not know how to access the service, or they thought they did not have the necessary equipment or they did not know whether or not they had AD. We would therefore also recommend that Ofcom, given its duties under section 10 of the Communications Act 2003, should consider what more might be done to encourage television and set top box manufacturers to make AD more easily accessible, given the obvious difficulty blind and partially sighted people may face in accessing AD via on screen menus. Remote controls which give single button access to AD, for example, like those now offered under the Switchover Help Scheme, make it much easier for blind and partially sighted people to use AD and should again increase usage.

The BBC would therefore be pleased to increase our own target for audio description to 20% of transmission hours of non-excluded programming in 2% annual increments from 2011 onwards. We believe, however, that it should be a matter for our fellow public service broadcasters to decide whether they wish to agree to higher targets for themselves, especially given the current pressures on commercial revenues.

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

Not at present but we look forward to contributing to Ofcom's review of signing provision next year and to discussing the implications of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive for VOD services in due course.