

DAC Update November 2012

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1 Secretary of State

Jim Edwards, in September, and on behalf of UKCoD, wrote to Maria Miller to welcome her to her new role. The minister responded at the end of October, stating on VRS: “I see this as an essential modern communication service for deaf British Sign Language (BLS) users in the UK, and I would like to see all businesses providing VRS for their disabled customers.”

2 BT

2.1 Meeting with Warren Buckley

Jim Edwards, Susan Daniels and Joff McGill met with Warren Buckley, Managing Director of Customer Services at BT. The meeting was facilitated by Sir Malcolm Bruce MP. A letter was sent to Warren Buckley after the meeting

Key points from the meeting:

- BT made a strong commitment on the implementation of NGTR, hoping to achieve it ahead of the April 2014 deadline.
- We welcomed this, if users can be reassured NGTR delivers a significant step change in the relay experience

- A shared belief that a focus on the user experience and excellent customer service will be key to addressing the many challenges ahead
- Expressed our on-going concern about a single provider and lack of other forces driving innovation and improvement.
- The role speech recognition technology can play in delivering close to real time conversations for deaf people – we are all keen to establish the evidence base for what is possible and the impact any technology change will have on all users
- the importance of communicating what NGTR will deliver and educating users how the improvements will work in practice.
- The need for greater clarity around the user experience particularly in relation to prefixes, mobile and other mainstream equipment use, the IP connection and any registration process.
- BT committed to sharing the development cycle for NGTR and the plans for looking at increased speed and accuracy issues, as well as a longer term road map for the evolution of the NGTR service.
- BT invited us to visit a service centre to help us with a better understanding of the provision involved in NGTR.
- On VRS, we expressed concerns about the complexities involved in the current discussions on funding, given the number of stakeholders involved. BT want to play a leadership role in finding solutions to funding VRS and we sought commitments that they will not only help with the lobbying around a voluntary funding model but also work with us to find viable alternatives if the voluntary funding route does not get traction in the short term
- We will contact BT after the 26th November to follow up on all these points

2.2 Contacting BT by video

BT have published a video of how their customers can contact them via video / BSL

<http://youtu.be/iNTKC96ZZ8A>

2.3 Sense and BT

Sense are working with BT to ensure they understand the equipment used by deafblind people to use the telephone.

3 Ofcom

There have been ongoing discussions with Ofcom since the DAC meeting that have taken in:

- 26th November workshop
- User experience Research
- Subtitles

- Provision of VRS in Europe
- VRS consultation
- Response to NGTR statement

Contacts at Ofcom: Alan Pridmore, Kiera Bowers, Katie Hanson

3.1 26th November Workshop

There was a report of the last e-Accessibility Forum sub group at the last DAC meeting and we talked about the workshop planned as a follow up. Ofcom have been supportive of the workshop, funding communication support, facilitators and hosting the day at their offices. .

The agenda is:

10am	Welcome, Introductions and General Update Workshop streams
10.30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Market and infrastructure
12.00	Sharing key issues and progress from streams
12.30pm	Lunch
	Workshop streams
1.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Market and infrastructure
2.45pm	Break
3.00pm	Summary, conclusions and next steps
4.00pm	Meeting ends

Facilitators: Alison Aylsbury, Rebecca Gamlin

Participants are:

Alan Blunt	DAC
Alistair Dixon	3
Ben Brown	BSkyB
Brian Martin	DAC
Christine Roberts	UKCTA
Christopher Jones	DAC
Jeff McWhinney	DAC
Joff McGill	DAC
Katie Hanson	Ofcom
Lorna Stephenson	BT
Steve Powell	DAC
Rickard Granberg	Talk Talk

Alan Pridmore	Ofcom
Andrew Minnis	ATW
Fareed Ahmad	DCMS
Francis Murphy	DAC
Hamish McLeod	Mobile Broadband Group
Jessica Thompkinson	3
Jim Edwards	DAC
Kath Phipps	DAC
Ronee Isaacson	Virgin
Sarah Jefferson	BT
Susan Daniels	DAC
Tony Shipley	DAC
Jean-Stephane Gourevitch	EE
Paul Lapraik	ODI

Kiera Bower	Ofcom
Joanna Wootton	BDF

The desired outcomes are for all participants to have:

1. Considered a voluntary funding model for video relay services
2. Reflected on where we are and what is possible, by when.
3. Considered the problems and issues a voluntary model faces
4. Highlighted who can help resolve the problems and the evidence / information we need to gather
5. Analysed the contribution to be made by and any gaps in:
 - A market response to service requirements
 - The technology infrastructure
 - Existing legislation, regulation and guidance
6. Developed an action plan and next steps

The workshop will be considering 4 scenarios:

- if a deaf person calls their bank / utility / government agency or health body using video relay it should be seen as a reasonable adjustment for the bank / utility / government agency or health body to pay for the cost of the relay call
- if a deaf person uses video relay at work, then the employer picks up the bill with ATW covering the costs
- if a deaf person speaks to a hearing friend or family member, or even a small business, there is a social responsibility for someone to pay for the extra costs of the relay call (after all, the market hasn't provided the services they need...)
- deaf person uses their own finances to pay for a relay call

3.2 User experience Research

DAC responded to Ofcom's request for information / feedback on the proposed user experience research that will look at the experience of NGTR compared to Text Relay. It is believed a tender for the research will be published soon

3.3 Subtitles

Ofcom hosted a roundtable on the quality of subtitles. Simon Pearse and AoHL contributed to the content of the meeting and other DAC members attended. Simon has reported on this meeting.

3.4 Provision of VRS around the world

Ofcom have commissioned and nearly completed research into the provision of VRS in other parts of the world. Publication is imminent. This should prove to be a useful document as part of establishing a shared evidence base for the case for a full range of relay services.

3.5 VRS consultation

Ofcom are scheduled to publish a further consultation on VRS. They are concerned that publishing the consultation has the potential to derail the voluntary initiative that started to gain traction at the last e-Accessibility sub group meeting. The consultation is likely to include an alternative to a voluntary solution, namely a mandated but capped provision. A further statement from Ofcom is expected next week.

3.6 Response to NGTR statement

After the workshop next week, DAC draft a letter to Ofcom summarising the key points from all of the above, as well as making a number of the points about NGTR that have been shared within DAC. Jack Sandover has done a useful summary and Ross has agreed to help draft the content. The response will also pick up on what the statement said about looking at technology / conversation speeds.

4 Communication Act

RNIB, Sense and Action on Hearing Loss have written to the clerk of the House of Lords Committee on Communication asking whether the Chair might be interested in undertaking a short inquiry into the accessibility issues raised by "A Communications Review for the Digital Age." The clerk has responded saying

the due to ongoing an inquiry, our request is unlikely to be formally considered until the Spring 2013.

If members of DAC have any links with members of the House of Lords Committee, please could you let Joff or Laura know.

5 DAC

5.1 Chair

UKCoD's trustees have accepted the recommendation that Sandra Verkuyten take up the Chair of DAC. A formal announcement will come out in due course.

5.2 Website

The new pages on the UKCoD website are now live – please see:

<http://deafcouncil.org.uk/news/category/dac/>

<http://deafcouncil.org.uk/deaf-access-to-communications.html>

<http://deafcouncil.org.uk/relay-services.html>

<http://deafcouncil.org.uk/communications-act.html>