



CAMPAIGN

Some call centres refuse third party calls

A few call centres, banks and other organisations have refused to take calls from third parties including RNID Typetalk claiming that to do so would infringe the Data Protection Act.

They claim that they should not accept personal details second-hand via a relay operator.

Many deaf people say that they have in effect already given permission for Typetalk to reveal their details, so why is it an issue?

Typetalk says that it is quite a common problem and that they have explained the situation to some organisations which have then accepted calls.

Lorna Hammerstein, Acting Director of RNID Typetalk said: "So often the problem comes down to individual people receiving the calls. There is one organisation in particular which is very inconsistent in its policy. It's very annoying for deaf people and our operators."

Ross Trotter TAG Secretary commented: "This is infuriating for deaf people. We struggle for equality in all forms of e-communications only to face these irritating problems. We will approach the Information Commissioner and if necessary will support deaf people seeking to establish case law through the courts."

Christopher Jones battles to receive special offers

I frequently receive calls offering me different services, better mobile phone plans, better gas tariffs and so on. Being the main purchaser in our household, my partner explains to callers that I am deaf and that she will relay the call for me. In every case, they say that the Data Protection Act does not allow them to discuss any details with me via my partner because of the third party issue.

I ask them to post me the details, but they usually say they can't. So, I offer to call them via Typetalk. No, they say, they can't receive incoming calls. OK, I say, can you redial me by using the TextDirect prefix of 18001? No, they can't because they are unable to modify the computer dialling list.

I suggest that they may be contravening the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 3 (DDA). So, on comes a Team Leader or even a Manager. But they always say that the Data Protection Act over-rides the DDA on this issue.

One particular call centre even asked me to speak! So I did, but my speech is not easy to understand and that persuaded them to permit my partner to relay the call! I may be avoiding some irritating calls, but I have no choice – often I do miss genuine offers. This is surely discriminatory!



TAG's newsletter about deaf people and telecoms, broadcasting and electronic communications.

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Confused by teletext on set-top boxes? You are not alone!

Richard Vaughan of TAG and NDCS explains

“Teletext” services are already available on digital terrestrial TV (where they are more accurately described as “digital text” services). They first appeared on BBC, and are now available on ITV, Channel 4, Sky and a few other channels. To access them, just press the “text” or the “red” button.

Some set top boxes do appear better than others at displaying digital text pages and some are very slow!

Some boxes don’t allow you to access digital text without switching off the subtitles first, which can be quite frustrating, so this might be one of the features worth checking-out before you



buy a new box.

Broadcasters are gradually adding more pages and, ironically, they are now looking a bit more like traditional teletext. For example, you can now usually enter page numbers to skip to the page you want

eg “101” for news headlines on BBC.

Pressing “888” doesn’t bring up subtitles, of course, but on BBC Text it does display some information about subtitles.

To add to the confusion, the BBC brands all its additional services as “interactive” under the general name of BBCi – that’s everything that you can access via the red button. So this includes the text pages, as well as additional video content, such as extra sports coverage (which is actually broadcast on Freeview channels 301, 302 and 303 – selecting from the menu automatically moves you between channels).

MyBBCPlayer – with subtitles – coming soon

Anyone who has trouble programming their video to record a programme (that’s just about everyone!), will be delighted by a new development coming from the BBC. It will be called MyBBCPlayer and it allows you to watch TV (and radio) programmes – with subtitles if they originally had them – up to one week after they are broadcast without using a video or DVD recorder. It will be free and it’s legal.

UK viewers will be able to download BBC TV (and radio) programmes to their home computers via the Internet up to seven days after the programme has been broadcast. At the end of the seven days, the programme file expires and you will no longer be able to watch it.

If you have portable devices connected to your PC like a mobile phone or PDA you can watch or listen to these programmes on the move.

However, the software doesn’t allow you to email the files to other computer users or share it via disc.

There’s even a chance to mess up your downloading by “booking” a series download in advance. Let’s hope that will be simpler than setting the VCR!

The service is being trialled by about 5000 people at the moment and BBC hopes it will be launched sometime in 2006. Although the technology is not new, BBC thinks its move will be a world first.



Ofcom sits back

Only Vodafone is complying with Ofcom's regulation (GC15) that all mobile phone companies should provide access to a relay service. But the telecoms regulator Ofcom seems reluctant to take action against the others who at best are only half-heartedly tackling the issue.

GC15 came into force in July 2003 and all operators should have offered access to the relay by January 2004.

In 2005, Orange offered a way to access RNID TYPETALK, but

for most deaf people it was not a very satisfactory solution.

Currently, the others offer access only by Relay Assist and not via the BT TextDirect prefixes – 18001 and 18002.

"We applaud Vodafone's quick compliance with GC15," said Ruth Myers, Chair of TAG. "But are very frustrated that Ofcom does not seem to be applying any real pressure on the other mobile operators to provide relay access. If it's a regulation, why don't they enforce it?"

IN BRIEF

Fixed-line texting

BT Text allows you to send texts from a fixed line phone. All you need is a text compatible landline phone and to be a BT subscriber. There are also special deals on texting if you subscribe to BT Together Option 2 or 3. www.bt.com/bttext/

Busy bees

Red Bee Media is the new name for BBC Broadcast, the company that does much of the subtitling and signing on British TV. It is now an independent company.



Flyers

You'll find two flyers with this Sequel:

Magic Messenger is proving quite popular and allows you to text from a fixed line and has other useful features. Tell us what you think.

A Digital UK leaflet provides important information about switchover from analogue to digital TV transmission. We know that at present Digital UK can only be contacted via TYPETALK and have asked them to install equipment to receive direct text calls from deaf people.

TAG's sponsors



Sequel is sponsored by a National Lottery Awards for All England grant and by ITV. TAG warmly acknowledges this support.

SUBTITLING & SIGNING QUOTAS

Most broadcasters are meeting or even exceeding the targets of subtitled and signed programmes they are supposed to produce. Ofcom, which administers the Code on Television Access Services, publishes figures every quarter.

Below is a selection for the first six months of this year. Targets vary according to a number of factors such as how long a service has been running.

Service	Subtitling		Signing	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
BBC1	88.75%	88.8%	3%	3%
BBC2	88.75%	90.5%	3%	3%
BBC3	67.5%	68.6%	3%	3.5%
BBC4	67.5%	69.3%	3%	3.3%
CBBC	67.5%	66.5%	3%	3.5%
Cbeebies	67.5%	80.7%	3%	4.1%
ITV1	84%	95.8%	3%	3.9%
Channel 4	84%	85.7%	3%	3.4%
Five	66%	68.2%	3%	2.8%
GMTV1	71%	90.3%	3%	3.1%
S4C	67%	65.5%	1%	1.6%
Sky One	10%	63.4%	1%	0.9%
E4	10%	53.7%	1%	1.2%
MTV	10%	4.4%	1%	2.8%

The real killer application

TAG's Vice Chair, Bill Pechey, visited the annual Smartphone Show this autumn and noted two important developments of interest to deaf people.

Firstly, quite soon we can expect to see more and better ways to receive and send emails from mobile phones. The Blackberry is very popular and other equipment will follow. This is proving a very popular application with general consumers – as well as deaf ones.

Secondly, and a little more in the future, much better video-conferencing and broadcast pictures will be possible on mobile phones. TV pictures might even begin to look better on your mobile than on your



TV! However, it is important for deaf people to lobby to ensure that clear text and signing can be incorporated in these better pictures.

"At a railway station on my way to the show, I saw a man watching a video clip on his mobile screen so intently that he almost walked off the platform and onto the track," said Bill Pechey. "I told this to someone at the show who suggested that perhaps this is the real 'killer application' everyone has been waiting for."

Feedback – it's your right!



Many deaf and hearing people had strong views about the TV programme 'Beyond Boundaries' about the expedition of a group of disabled people across Nicaragua.



"We were warned it would be uncomfortable viewing, but I found it embarrassing rather than uncomfortable," said Ruth Myers, TAG Chair. "It was a great example of why deaf people shouldn't confine their comments about TV to subtitles and signing."

"Broadcasters always welcome feedback from deaf people. TAG urges deaf viewers to give feedback and even to apply to join BBC Audience Groups like the English National Forum, independent advisers who meet locally and quarterly with the BBC to report on the performance of regional and network programmes and services."

- For BBC Forums, see www.bbc.co.uk/england/acc/
 - For specific BBC feedback, see www.bbc.co.uk/feedback/
- And of course, TAG and Sequel welcomes your views: email r.myers@merula.co.uk

Events

Emerging Technologies

A seminar on 17 May 2006 in Central London.

Organised by TAG, the seminar will be hosted by the Department of Trade and Industry. Admission will be by ticket only – for details, email r.myers@merula.co.uk

Access to Technology Public Hearing

Organised by RNID, Disabled Living Foundation and Scientific Generics on behalf of the Alliance for Digital Inclusion.

12 December 2005

9.30 to 11.30am

Email ict@rnid.org.uk



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