

[GB] Broadcasters Required to Offer Enhanced Services for Blind and/or Deaf People

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The UK's Communications Act 2003 (Sections 303, 305) requires the Office of Communications (Ofcom) to "to draw up, and from time to time to review and revise, a code giving guidance" as to how broadcasters should ensure the "understanding and enjoyment" of programmes by persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; blind or partially-sighted; and persons with a dual sensory impairment (i.e. both). Such an undertaking will be fulfilled by the provision of adequate "Television Access Services".

Examples of such services are: subtitling, signing and audio description.

Additionally, under Section 310 of the Act, Ofcom is obliged to draw up a Code giving guidance regarding practices involved in the provision of electronic programme guides. Such practices must also include the appropriate incorporation of such features in electronic programme guides so that persons with "disabilities affecting their sight or hearing or both" can "make use of such guides for all the same purposes as persons without such disabilities" and "are informed about, and are able to make use of, whatever assistance for disabled people is provided in relation to the programmes listed or promoted".

Ofcom published draft proposals in December 2003. The Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People assisted in the input to the drafting of the Codes. Ofcom published the two Codes on 26 July 2004.

Code on Electronic Programme Guides

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/responses/epc/statement/statement.pdf>

