

# Hard of Hearing People and the Relay Services

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# Do hard of hearing people need accessible telecoms?

- It is often assumed that all hard of hearing and deafened people rely on amplified phones and hearing technology alone.
- Hearing loss and how it affects an individual may change over their lifetime.
- Accents, strangers' voices and misunderstanding callers' messages are familiar issues hard of hearing people deal with.
- The first question potential employers usually ask a hard of hearing person: *“can you manage with telephone calls?”*

Provision of captioned telephony benefits society, employers and the individual



# UK Text Relay Service

Available 24/7  
365 days  
no extra charge

The UK's national text relay service started in 1991 and is now run by British Telecom as **mandated by OFCOM** . In 2014 British Telecom launched the Next Generation Text service, which is run for everyone on behalf of all UK landline and mobile phone providers and can be used by textphone users and also using smartphones, computers, and tablets via an app.

<https://www.ngts.org.uk/about-ngts.html>

## UK COMMUNICATIONS ACT 2003 Special measures for end-users with a disability

- 6.—(1) Special measures shall be taken to ensure access to and affordability of publicly available telephone services for end-users with a disability equivalent to those enjoyed by other end-users.
- (c) provision of, and the provision of access to, **relay services** for end-users with a disability where required to ensure access to publicly available telephone services by such end-users;

# Telephone Relay services to enable functional equivalence...

Are all deaf and hard of hearing people in Europe able to use the telephone in **same unrestricted manner** and at the same cost as hearing people?

## THE ANSWER IS..... NOT ALL

Beware of using Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) as stand alone service.

**It can fail in functional equivalence in accuracy.**

## THE NEXT STEPS ...

- Development of funding models (*no additional cost to users*)
- Relay Services provision enshrined in the national laws
- Services developed with users involvement
- Introduction of captioned telephony

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