
Television channels required to provide access services in 2020

Statement:

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About this document

This document explains which TV channels licensed by Ofcom are required to provide access services (subtitles, signing and audio description) on a proportion of their programming in 2020.

Access services are intended to help people with sensory impairments to understand and enjoy TV programmes. The channels required to provide access services include domestic channels broadcast within the UK and some non-domestic channels broadcast within certain Member States of the European Union.

In 2020, 88 domestic channels will be required to provide access services. 19 non-domestic channels across four different member states of the European Union will be required to provide access services.

1. Statement

- 1.1 The Communications Act 2003 (“the Act”) required Ofcom to publish a code setting out the obligations of television channels licensed in the UK to provide television access services. Following consultation, Ofcom published the Ofcom Code on Television Access Services (“the Code”) in July 2004, together with an explanatory statement setting out the channels that would be required to provide such services in the following year. A copy of the current version of the Code, incorporating amendments made since the Code was first published, can be found at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/97040/Access-service-code-Jan-2017.pdf.
- 1.2 The Code also provides for a mid-year review of the audience share and revenues of UK-licensed television channels, based on data for the previous year. The purposes of the review are to establish whether, in the next calendar year, channels should be:
- a) required to provide television access services;
 - b) required to meet a different level of provision; or
 - c) excluded from the requirement to provide television access services.
- 1.3 The statutory targets for broadcasters are expressed as percentages of the service. They rise from a low level to the ten-year targets prescribed by the Act, that is 80% for subtitling, 5% for signing and 10% for audio description. In the case of Channel 3 (ITV and STV) and Channel 4, the relevant target for subtitling is 90% and for BBC channels (excluding BBC Parliament and BBC Scotland, which are exempted on the basis of the size of their audience) it is 100%¹.
- 1.4 Ofcom has used the cost of providing access services to calculate three levels of provision that we apply to relevant channels:
- a) Level One equates to the full current annual targets for subtitling, signing and audio description, as well as any alternative requirements;
 - b) Level Two equates to 66% of the current annual target for subtitling, as well as 100% of the targets for signing and audio description, and any alternative requirements; and
 - c) Level Three equates to 33% of the current annual target for subtitling, as well as 100% of the targets for signing and audio description and any alternative requirements.
- 1.5 For channels broadcasting within the UK (‘domestic channels’), data collected from broadcasters in early 2018 was used by Ofcom to estimate the costs incurred for the provision of access services. This helps assess whether broadcasters can afford to meet their obligations, by spending no more than 1% of their relevant turnover.

¹ Under the BBC Charter and Agreement, Ofcom has specific duties relating to access services on BBC television and on demand services.

- 1.6 For channels broadcasting in other Member States of the European Union ('non-domestic channels'), Ofcom collected data from broadcasters in early 2019. This data has been used to generate country-specific estimates of the different costs incurred for the provision of access services. Ofcom then used these estimates to determine which non-domestic channels can afford to provide access services from 2020.

Domestic TV Services

- 1.7 The list of domestic channels required to provide access services in 2020 is at Annex 1. In brief:
- a) 88 channels will be required to provide television access services in 2020²;
 - b) 83 channels will be required to provide access services at Level One during 2020 and five channels will be required to provide access services at Level Two. No channels will be required to provide access services at Level Three. Subtitling targets are now the highest required under the Code (80%) for most channels, with audio description at the maximum level of 10% for most; and
 - c) over 50 time-shifted services (e.g. ITV2 + 1) and simulcast HD services (e.g. Channel 4 HD) are also required to provide access services.
- 1.8 The statutory target for audio description is 10% from the tenth anniversary of the relevant launch date (normally the date on which a channel started broadcasting). Four broadcasters – the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky – have committed to audio describing at least 20% of their content on most of their channels (excluding sports channels in the case of Sky).
- 1.9 Finally, the statutory target for sign-interpreted programming is 5% from the tenth anniversary of the relevant date. Channels with a smaller audience share (i.e. an audience share between the audience share and signing thresholds set out in Annex 2) are excluded from the requirement to provide sign interpreted programming. Instead they are required to either:
- a) provide a minimum amount of sign-presented programming between 7am and 11pm every month, subject to the targets shown in the first row of Table A below and to transitional arrangements as shown in Table B; or
 - b) pay a minimum annual contribution towards alternative signing arrangements approved by Ofcom as set out in Table A below and subject to transitional arrangements as shown in Table B.

² Ofcom is still assessing whether a number of channels licensed by NBC Universal should be given a requirement to provide access services in 2020. This statement will be updated when the assessment has been completed.

Table A: Signing obligations for channels with smaller audience shares

Signing obligations for channels with smaller audience shares (These channels should show at least the amount of sign-presented content set out below unless Ofcom has approved alternative arrangements)		
Anniversary of relevant date	Sign-presented content (monthly)	Minimum annual contribution towards alternative arrangements ³
First	30 minutes	£25,971
Second	30 minutes	£25,971
Third	30 minutes	£25,971
Fourth	30 minutes	£25,971
Fifth	45 minutes	£39,010
Sixth	45 minutes	£39,010
Seventh	60 minutes	£52,048
Eighth	60 minutes	£52,048
Ninth	60 minutes	£52,048
Tenth	75 minutes	£65,086

³ Ofcom has adjusted these figures to reflect the Consumer Price Index in 2018 being recorded at 2.5% (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7g7>). We will again review and, if necessary, update the minimum contribution levels when we publish the annual list of channels required to provide television access services in 2021.

Table B: Transitional arrangements

(for relevant channels that reached the fourth (or later) anniversary of their relevant date by 1 January 2016)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ⁴	2021	2022
Minimum monthly sign-presentation obligations	30 minutes	35 minutes	45 minutes	50 minutes	60 minutes	65 minutes	75 minutes
Minimum annual contributions to alternative arrangements	£24,500	£28,600	£37,058	£42,298	£52,048	£56,393	£65,086

Non-domestic TV Services

1.10 The list of non-domestic channels required to provide access services in 2019 is at Annex 2. In brief:

- a) There is a significant decrease in the number of non-domestic channels required to provide access services in 2020 compared to 2019. This is due to the fact that all but one of the channels are now licensed outside the United Kingdom.
- b) 19 non-domestic channels will be required to provide television access services in 2020. The channels required to provide access services in 2020 are broadcast in four Member States of the European Union;
- c) 18 non-domestic channels will be required to provide access services at Level One and one channel will provide access services at Level Two. No channels will provide access services at Level Three; and
- d) Ofcom assessed whether any channels outside the European Union to which the Audio Visual Media Services Directive⁵ applies should be given a requirement to provide access services in 2020. No such channels have been given a requirement as none met the audience share and affordability criteria.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32010L0013>

A1. Domestic channels required to provide access services in 2020

Level One (full requirements) (83 channels as compared with 81 in 2019)		
BBC One	MTV Music	Sky Arts
BBC Two	Comedy Central	Challenge
BBC Four	Comedy Central Extra	Dave
BBC News	Sky Atlantic	W
CBBC	Sky News	Yesterday
CBeebies	Sky One	Alibi
ITV (incl. STV services)	Sky Two	Good Food
ITV2	Pick	Home
ITV3	Sky Sports Main Event	Gold
ITV4	Sky Sports Premier League	Really
ITVBe	Sky Sports Football	Drama
CITV	Sky Sports Cricket	Disney Channel
Channel 4	Sky Sports Golf	Disney Junior
4seven	Sky Sports Action	Disney XD
E4	Sky Sports Mix	BT Sport 1
More 4	Sky Sports Arena	BT Sport 2
Film 4	Sky Sports F1	BT Sport 3
4Music	Sky Sports News	Universal
Channel 5	Sky Cinema Premiere	Discovery
5Star	Sky Cinema Comedy	Quest
5USA	Sky Cinema Action	Quest Red
5Select	Sky Cinema Family	Investigation Discovery
5Spike	Sky Cinema Sci Fi & Horror	Animal Planet
Nickelodeon	Sky Cinema Greats	TLC
Nicktoons	Sky Cinema Drama & Romance	Fox
Nick Jr.	Sky Cinema Hits	
Nick Jr Too	Sky Cinema Thriller	
Paramount Network	Sky Cinema Disney	
MTV	Sky Witness	

Level Two (full requirements for signing and audio description; 66% of subtitling) (Five channels as compared with four in 2019)		
Boomerang	Cartoon Network	S4C
CBS Reality	National Geographic	

Level Three (full requirements for signing and audio description; 33% of subtitling) (Zero channels as compared with one in 2019)		

A2. Non-domestic channels required to provide access services in 2020

Level One (full requirements) (18 channels, compared to 26 in 2019)	
EU Member State	Channel
Denmark	Kanal 4
	Kanal 5
	6'eren
	3+
	TV3
	TV3 Puls
Republic of Ireland*	BBC One
	BBC Two
	Channel 4
	Sky One
Sweden	Discovery Channel
	Kanal 5
	Kanal 9
	Kanal 11
	TV3
	TV6
	TV8
	TV10

Level Two (full requirements for signing and audio description; 66% of subtitling) (One channels, compared with one in 2019)	
EU Member State	Channel
France	Disney Cinema

Level Three (full requirements for signing and audio description; 33% of subtitling) (No channels, compared with one in 2019)	
EU Member State	Channel
N/A	N/A

* Indicates countries where TV platforms do not generally support the provision of audio description and channels are typically exempt from the relevant requirement.