

Good morning,

I am writing in response to your recent consultation on EPG facilities/proposals in the UK.

I have been severely visually impaired all of my life and now, aged 53, I can say access to TV has never been better.

As a young adult, I had to watch TV with someone sighted who could tell me all the things that I was missing because it was visually conveyed on screen. Fortunately, Audio Described Films and TV was invented and this has made an absolutely dramatic improvement to the amount of TV I am able to enjoy. The more of this facility we can have, the more enjoyment blind and partially sighted people can get from what would normally be considered a primarily visual medium.

Of course the experience of watching TV cannot actually start with the watching. We are all individuals and have differing likes and preferences. Fortunately, TV programme makers know this and consequently, a whole host of differing interests are covered. But, where to start? I have a couple of hours free this evening and could watch TV, but which channel? What's on?

I personally have two options currently to find out what's on TV. Firstly, I can go online to <http://www.tvhelp.org.uk> where all Audio Described TV programmes are listed. This is ok if I'm sitting at work with a bit of time on my hands and can browse the listings, but not ideal, and certainly not a solution for all, or possibly, even the majority of sight-impaired people.

My other, and preferred way of finding out what's on TV is the EPG of my set top box made by TVONICS. The TVONICS Freeview set top box was designed in conjunction with help from RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) and has Audio description (when available) and talking menus and EPG.

Unfortunately the manufacturer of the TVONICS set top box is no-longer trading and so there are no new supplies of this item and obviously support for existing units is somewhat limited.

But even this isn't ideal as I have to turn on my TV, then my set top box and either wait and hope the TV will automatically turn to the external input channel, or press buttons on the remote control to achieve this.

What I, and other blind and partially sighted people really need is the TV to be able to offer talking EPG facilities. Of course, EPG on its own talking wouldn't be enough as I probably wouldn't manage to navigate the menus in order to get to the EPG in the first place. Consequently, we need talking EPG and talking menus.

I'm really grateful for help so far that has helped improve the access of TV and hope the above will both inform and inspire you to encourage further improvements.