

# EPG ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

DigitalUK

30 November 2018



## Our position

- **Digital UK and Freeview work to make Freeview the best and most accessible universal free-to-view TV service.**  
Digital UK and Freeview work in partnership to develop the UK's most used and loved free-to-view TV service. Freeview is a universal service and as such it needs to cater for the widest possible range of audience requirements. Digital UK and Freeview are committed to deliver improvements in the accessibility of Freeview products and services every year, especially through collaboration with our partners, i.e. manufacturers of Freeview receivers and content providers making their channels and services available to our audiences
- **Freeview Play** is our latest proposition. First launched in late 2015, it is the Freeview-branded connected TV service designed to make the best of broadcast and internet-delivered television available free to everyone. Our ambition is to make Freeview Play the 'new normal' universal TV service in the UK
- **Freeview is a horizontal platform**  
Digital UK and Freeview define the product operating rules for Freeview and Freeview Play devices. Product implementation however, is down to manufacturers operating in a horizontal market and we do not have direct control of receivers. Manufacturers develop their own user interfaces for their EPGs. Digital UK works closely with manufacturer partners developing Freeview Play devices to drive EPG improvements (including on accessibility) through careful cooperation
- **Freeview Explore (FVX)** is an interactive HbbTV application available on Freeview Play devices, which encourages On Demand content discovery through search and curated recommendations. FVP users can access FVX by tuning into channel 100, or by selecting the FVX app from the apps page of their device
- **Digital UK holds two Ofcom EPG provider licences**  
A DTAS licence which covers service information (EPG data) that is broadcast via DTT, and a complementary TLCS licence for the enhanced service information delivered over IP for Freeview Play receivers

# Overview of accessibility features delivered through current Freeview Play devices

## Our partners already deliver a number of accessibility features

- The development of FVP devices last released to the UK market in 2018 began long before the update to the accessibility requirements in the EPG Code. However, some of the new requirements are already delivered by our partners
  - **Text-to-speech**: all 2018 LG Smart TVs and the vast majority of 2018 Panasonic Smart TVs include text-to-speech
  - **High Contrast**: the default UIs of several of our partners already comply with high contrast requirements
  - **Filtering / highlighting of programmes with AD / SL** and **screen magnification** are however not yet supported in FVP devices
- Other accessibility features:
  - All FVP devices released in 2018 support the **delivery and signalling** (in the EPG and in programme information screens) of **subtitles, audio description, sign language** across live and OD content
  - Many manufacturers have or are working towards enabling **voice control** and **voice search** on their devices. High-end LG TVs have voice control built-in through AI-assisted proprietary solutions. Many other manufacturers are releasing software updates to allow integration of their devices with third party voice solutions (esp. Amazon and Google)
  - All FVP devices go through a UI approval process designed to ensure **clarity and consistency** in user controls and user journeys. This includes meeting requirements for **tactile and clearly laid-out remote control units**. In addition, LG and Panasonic FVP devices allow **alternative inputs** for users finding the remote control difficult to use

## Close engagement with all partners and industry bodies

- **Text-to-speech:** We continued our work with LG's text-to-speech implementation to streamline and improve the user experience. 2018 and onwards LG devices now have more voice prompts in the EPG and more consistent flow for users navigating who cannot clearly see the interface
- **Subtitles:** We continue to work with content partners to encourage them to create subtitled and audio described content so that their applications reflect linear viewing
  - Working with HbbTV we have been able to specify that future Freeview Play devices will reflect a user's choice to view subtitles on linear TV, inside a content partner's application. Once this is available in future devices, a user will no longer have to turn subtitles on in each application, each time it is launched. If they have subtitles turned on when they are watching linear content then this selection will automatically be reflected in compatible applications
  - We are also therefore working with the application providers who supply subtitles against on-demand content to ensure their FVP applications make use of this new feature
- **DTG & RNIB:** We have engaged and contributed to the work led by DTG and RNIB on the next iteration of the U-Book, focusing on practical implementation guidelines which we can action, especially in our Freeview Explore TV application
- **Product Requirements:** To drive accessibility adoption throughout our service, DUK made receiver support for our three key accessibility content features (Subtitles, Audio Description, Sign Language) a mandatory requirement for all hardware entering our ecosystem in 2018. We have commenced work on our latest Product Overview Document that sets requirements for Freeview Play implementations entering the market in 2020. This will include new accessibility requirements

# Freeview Play – driving further improvements (1)



## Working for the broader implementation of new mandated features

- Following introduction of new requirements to the EPG Code in July 2018 to drive better outcomes for viewers with visual impairments, DUK as a Licenced EPG Provider is working to drive wider implementation of the following features in future TV receivers:

1. Talking EPGs
2. Filtering / highlighting of AD programmes & signing
3. Screen magnification
4. High contrast UIs

- **Our work in this area needs to carefully balance different perspectives.** We share the policy objective that the new regulations are designed to meet – especially because our ambition is for Freeview Play to become the ‘new normal’ for a universal TV service in the UK. Ofcom's requirements apply to the EPG provider (i.e. Digital UK in the case of Freeview and Freeview Play) but the nature of Freeview as a horizontal platform means that any EPG improvement requires consent and support of our manufacturer partners

We set rules and provide guidance on the UIs of FVP receivers but the participation of manufacturers to the Freeview Play project is voluntary and subject to commercial agreement. At present most but not all manufacturers active in the UK market work with us to make their devices FVP-compatible. Imposing requirements to implement advanced accessibility features risks antagonising our manufacturers partners, thus jeopardising the success of FVP to date as well as our chances of driving the accessibility agenda. But we believe we can achieve real improvements in the accessibility of Freeview Play devices through cross-industry partnerships and a balanced approach to delivery

- Hence, we are planning to use a combination of tools to drive further adoption of accessibility features (see next page)

# Freeview Play – driving further improvements (2)



## Working for the broader implementation of new mandated features (continued)

- **Careful engagement with FVP manufacturers on new product rules and tech requirements for native implementation of the new mandated features.** We will specify the new Ofcom mandated features as part of our new Accessibility rules for 2020 FVP products, to be published in early 2019 – so that, wherever possible, these are delivered “natively” in the default TV user interface, maximising reach and minimising any friction for users. In parallel, we will progress ongoing consultations with our manufacturer partners on how feasible it is for them to comply with these new requirements
- **Assessing how best to drive accessibility improvements through HbbTV apps.** In recent months Digital UK has prototyped the delivery of an accessible EPG through an ad-hoc HbbTV app, and we are now scoping further work on this for 2019. This technical approach allows a third party to deliver specific functionality to FVP devices with minimal manufacturer involvement. FVX is a live example of how we already do this in a different context (to deliver curated recommendations, search and help & alerts).

The advantage of this approach is that it would allow accessibility improvements in all FVP devices (including those already in UK homes) by minimising the burden on our manufacturer partners. The drawback is that any HbbTV app would not substitute the native EPG, so both would coexist on the same device. Hence, this would be a temporary alternative to native implementation and as part of our work we will consider how best to minimise any user barrier or confusion. Upon launching this app, we would look to work with relevant groups and charities to help make users aware of it

- **Encouraging the DTG to include the new Ofcom requirements in the D-Book.** Because Ofcom requirements for reasonable endeavours apply to *all new* TV receivers (FVP and non-), due consideration should be given to the inclusion of new specifications in the D-book. While the DTG Accessibility Working Group has been active in recent months to reflect the new Ofcom guidelines in the U-book, we plan to go further and discuss with all DTG members the feasibility of greater harmonisation of DTT receivers capabilities through the D-book. Any advantage, however, should be balanced against risks of upward price pressures, which would be particularly relevant for entry-level devices

## Other work with Content Providers and through second screens

- **Driving consistency and breadth of accessibility content and features**

We will continue working with existing and new content providers to encourage a consistent accessible experience across all On Demand players available on Freeview Play, ensuring:

- Access Services such as Subtitles and Audio Description are available on as many content items as possible
- On Demand players respect user's choice (e.g. Subtitles) as per the HbbTV specification
- Adoption of consistent remote control shortcuts to enable and disable accessibility features

- **Expanding accessibility support through second screens.** Our new **Freeview Mobile App** is due to be released soon and will have accessibility built-in from the start. Future iterations planned for 2019 will deliver second screen functionality, and this would allow for accessible navigation of TV screens through mobile devices. We provide further details on the following slide

## Freeview Mobile App

### ■ iOS – early 2019

- Development of the new Freeview Mobile App is in progress and will be available in the app store early in the new year for iOS mobile devices
- The App has provided flexibility for introducing more Accessible features into Freeview products than ever before
- The App includes a TV Guide, which is effectively turned into a Talking EPG if the user switches on iOS Voice Over functionality
- Development has followed Apple's Accessibility guidelines as part of the navigation and user experience, to optimise familiar gestures and on screen text throughout the App, from initial setup to browsing content

### ■ Android - 2019

- The App will be available on Android devices in the first half of 2019
- Visually impaired users will be able to access a Talking EPG by switching on the 'TalkBack' feature on their device. Similar to the Voice Over function on iOS, TalkBack will describe actions on the users screen as well as alerts and notifications

# Freeview Mobile Application (2)

## Freeview Mobile App (continued)

### ■ Future Developments

- There will be ongoing development of the app on both operating systems post launch
- Digital UK will always identify opportunities for a more accessible Application and will be working closely with specialised mobile developers to include new accessibility features within the User Experience

### ■ Additional features

- iOS and Android operating systems have a wide range of functions which can be switched on or off depending on the users needs

These include:

- Zoom
- Button shapes
- Contrast control
- Colour invert/Colour filters



## Freeview Website and Advice Line

- The Freeview Advice Line number remains prominent on the homepage of the Freeview website. Our Advice Line agents are trained in disability awareness and are sensitive to the needs of callers. Viewers who are deaf, have a hearing impairment or speech disorder can contact our agents using **webchat, Facebook, Twitter, email or our textphone service**
- With the 700MHz programme underway, we are seeing far more traffic being served by webchat with January – August year on year volumes through this channel up 102%. We plan to place more resource on webchat and expand the number of pages on our website from which the webchat facility is activated
- During 2019 we plan to relaunch the Freeview website. The new site will work to comply with [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#) (Level AA) to ensure that all users - regardless of auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech, or visual ability - are able to use the site. It will contain a refreshed suite of FAQs and tools to help viewers looking for the information they need. Of the viewers who call the Freeview Advice Line but who have been on the website beforehand, we estimate a third could be helped online if we improved the quality of our content and navigation to this content
- In 2019 we also plan to improve the help and alerts section of Freeview Explore to enable viewers to self-help further than they are currently able

Thank you

DigitalUK