

Supporting Vulnerable Consumers with Targeted Assistance Before, During and After Digital Radio Switchover

A paper by prepared by the Consumer Expert Group (CEG)
for the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), July
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Summary of Recommendations

The Consumer Expert Group's prime recommendations are:

1) At the time of the 'in principle' decision on digital switchover of radio, the Government should announce that there will be a Help Scheme and broadly which groups will be eligible for targeted assistance.

We are seriously concerned that, in the absence of such a commitment, public support for a mandated switchover to digital radio will be weak and we would anticipate that political and stakeholder pressure for a Help Scheme will be immediate and pronounced.

2) Eligibility for the Government's Help Scheme for vulnerable groups should certainly include the four groups used for the digital TV switchover Help Scheme, but a scheme for radio needs to have wider eligibility because the TV scheme identified unmet consumer needs and because radios are so much more personal and portable than televisions.

Our report identifies the other groups that we believe should be covered by a Help Scheme for radio and provides some indicative numbers and other considerations. As the Go Digital trial in Bath has shown, generally where help is needed it is of a lesser order than for TV switchover, so one could characterise our proposed scheme for radio as 'wider but thinner'.

The programme for television switchover showed that, with an effective communications programme, most people switched to digital before their locality switched over and many of those needing support found it from family and friends. Less than a fifth of those eligible under the TV scheme actually applied for help from the scheme – although reviews of that Help Scheme have shown that, for those who took up the assistance, the scale of intervention offered by the scheme was exactly what was often absolutely necessary for their circumstances.¹

We would expect all these factors to operate in the case of radio switchover which is probably about five years away and therefore, together with the lower level of assistance required in most cases, we are convinced that a radio Help Scheme with the wider eligibility we propose would be cost-effective.

¹ Collins, Richard (2013), *The UK digital television switchover help scheme: how it assisted blind and partially sighted people*. A policy review. RNIB: London.

The Consumer Expert Group further recommends that:

- a) While the Go Digital trial in Bath was useful and encouraging in general terms, we would support a further, more detailed trial of how switchover would affect those with particular impairments, situational barriers or health issues including samples of the additional groups that we propose be covered by a radio Help Scheme as compared to that for television.
- b) Eligibility for support under a targeted Help Scheme for vulnerable groups should be determined in relation to the need of the vulnerable groups concerned and we have identified some of the main groups that we believe should be included in a radio Help Scheme.
- c) We are very concerned that the announcement of digital switchover for radio and the subsequent publicity will offer new opportunities for rogue traders and distraction burglars possibly gaining entrance on the pretence of retuning the radio. To minimise this risk, we strongly support the development of the digital installer scheme and the use of the digital logo.
- d) Similarly any specific help to vulnerable households will need to pay particular attention to matters of security to protect these households. We recommend that the body (or bodies) implementing the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups adopts the processes that were used by the Digital TV Help Scheme operation to ensure as far as possible that any opportunity for the exploitation of vulnerable households is minimised.
- e) It is vital that the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups should be accompanied by an adequate free help line that can be accessed through a variety of means. Any equipment given under the targeted Help Scheme should be accompanied by an appropriate instruction package and user guide. Government must ensure that both vulnerable support services and associated information provision are accessible to those who do not have English as their first language, who are unable to read English to an adequate level, or who have other special communications needs in relation to their impairment.
- f) Switchover support and home visits under the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups must remain live for at least 1 year after switchover has been completed, and the help line support should remain available for 18 months.
- g) The Help Scheme for vulnerable groups should be available in all housing contexts, as long as the resident meets the eligibility criteria. This would include care homes, sheltered and secure accommodation, hospitals and hospices, and refugee and asylum centres.

- h) There should be a clear duty on the Government to make contact with people who are eligible for the Help Scheme. If Government is unable to find people, people should be able to opt in to the Help Scheme, demonstrating their eligibility
- i) The Government has to give the Help Scheme the possibility of using central databases that help identify people who would be eligible for targeted help. If this would require amending legislation, the matter should be addressed in a timely manner.
- j) The Government should monitor take-up of the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups against target figures calculated on the basis of impairment prevalence and size of the vulnerable population.
- k) Delivering support to the most socially and geographically isolated will be very important. The Government should monitor closely if the statistics on the uptake of digital radio would identify a section of the population other than those already eligible who may need further support because of social or geographical isolation.
- l) Volunteers will have a key role to play in delivering support and information for vulnerable groups before, at and after switchover, but the voluntary sector simply does not have the capacity to provide this support and therefore a measure of public funding will be required
- m) The DCMS should draw up a budget to facilitate the involvement of volunteers as “trusted assistants” who can visit vulnerable consumers just before and after switchover to provide peer support with using the new technology. This financial support should include professionals already working within the voluntary sector.
- n) The Help Scheme should not undermine charities already working in the field.

Membership & Remit of The Consumer Expert Group

As of the production of this report, representatives from the following organisations attended the Consumer Expert Group (CEG):

- Action on Hearing Loss
- Age UK
- British Wireless for The Blind Fund
- Citizens Advice
- Communications Consumer Panel
- MenCap
- The Network of Rural Community Councils
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- Sense
- Voice of the Listener & Viewer
- Wavelength
- Which?

The remit of the Consumer Expert Group in relation to digital radio is as follows:

“To advise Government on:

- *The issues arising for consumers of the implementation of the Digital Radio Switchover programme*
- *The ways of communicating the principles and impact of the Digital Radio Switchover, including the timetable, to consumers*

To write any reports deemed necessary to fulfil this remit

Government will give due consideration to and respond to reports and other advice received from the CEG.”

Section 1.3 of Version 9 (June 2013) of the Digital Radio Action Plan (DRAP) states:

“Scope full range of human factor issues. Taking account of the analysis and any other available evidence, identify which, if any, listeners would be disproportionately disadvantaged by a Digital Radio Switchover and how appropriate provisions and services should be made, for example, through a Help Scheme.”

Section 1.9 of the DRAP states:

“To report on the case for a Digital Radio Help Scheme, and determine where it might apply and how it could be administered.”

The Plan suggests that the report on a Help Scheme should be delivered – later than originally anticipated - in the third quarter of 2013 to enable the report to take account of (i) the findings of the Cost Benefit Analysis and (ii) the results of the Go Digital trial. However, we are doubtful that the DCMS has the resources to do this work in the timescale suggested which leaves open the serious possibility that Government will make an ‘in principle’ decision on switchover in the absence of any official proposals for a Help Scheme.

Meanwhile we are most disappointed that the Cost Benefit Analysis has not already been produced and are concerned that it will not be published much, if at all, before the Government’s ‘in principle’ announcement.

Therefore the CEG feels it to be appropriate and helpful to produce and submit proposals for a Help Scheme now and indeed Section 1.9 of the DRAP specifically refers to such a report from the CEG.

For further information about this report, please contact the CEG Chair Roger Darlington at:
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Background & Go Digital Trial

The decision on digital radio switchover will come only a little more than a year after conclusion of the successful programme for digital television switchover. CEG member organisations were substantially involved in television switchover and monitored particularly carefully the operation of the Help Scheme for that programme. Our recommendations in this report draw on our experience of TV DSO and our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Help Scheme for that programme.

Another important source of information for us in drawing up our proposals has been our careful study of the report by Ipsos MediaCT on the Go Digital Trial in Bath conducted between January and March 2013.

We are pleased that the study produced generally favourable results in that many found digital radios easy to use and many enjoyed the benefits of digital radio, Encouraging findings included:

- Some 86% of the main sample found set up of DAB radio(s) extremely or quite easy.
- Some 79% of the main sample found it much or a little easier to use DAB than initially anticipated.
- Some 80% of the main sample found the experience of digital radio as compared to analogue a lot or a little better.

However, there were clear warning signs that vulnerable users are less convinced of the benefits of radio switchover and look to more support for the process.

Some of the most relevant points in that report for this submission are as follows:

- On a list of five perceived benefits of digital radio identified pre-trial, in every case the vulnerable sample scored significantly lower than the main sample, indicating that, when it comes to national switchover, vulnerable groups will assume less benefit and require more encouragement – including support – to make the switch.
- In all, only 81 vulnerable households were involved in the various stages of the trials and samples of those with specific vulnerabilities were much smaller, so that limited lessons can be drawn as to ease of transitioning to using digital radio only.
- Even so, 20% of vulnerable households generally and some 30% of those aged 65 years or over found the initial set up difficult, compared to only 8% overall.
- Older people took longer to understand how to use the radios, tune in the stations, set up presets, and set the alarm.

- The vulnerable sample showed less inclination to listen more often to radio post-trial: only 28% compared to 47% for the main sample (although both figures may be inflated by the novelty of the equipment and the attention of the trial).
- Older people tended to stick to the same listening habits and so derived fewer benefits from digital radio.

While very useful in general terms, the Go Digital trial needs to be supplemented by further research in relation to vulnerable consumers. This is because of the small absolute numbers of those with particular impairments, situational barriers or health issues: 9 blind or partially sighted people, 12 requiring assisted care, and 32 older people (aged 75+) with disabilities or health issues.

Therefore we would recommend a further, more detailed trial of how switchover would affect those with particular impairments, situational barriers or health issues including samples of the additional groups that we propose be covered by a radio Help Scheme as compared to that for television. Investment in such a further trial now will probably save money and avoid problems in the longer run.

Finally, we need to make a point about the nature of vulnerability. Some people are vulnerable on a long-term basis because of age, chronic illness, or impairment. Others might be vulnerable temporarily because illness, unemployment or low income. People are not vulnerable in themselves but because of their circumstances and their needs not being met and it is these circumstances and needs that we are considering in this report. Nevertheless, on occasions, we will use the term 'vulnerable persons' as a widely-understood shorthand.

We believe that the recommendations in this report reflect the approach to vulnerability published by Ofgem in July 2013. That paper, entitled "Consumer Vulnerability Strategy" [<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Sustainability/SocAction/Documents1/Consumer%20vulnerability%20strategy.pdf>] states:

"Whilst we recognise that any consumer can face detriment in a market, our work under this Strategy focuses on those consumers in vulnerable situations who are most in need of protection or support. For this purpose we have defined vulnerability as when a consumer's personal circumstances and characteristics combine with aspects of the market to create situations where he or she is:

Significantly less able than a typical consumer to protect or represent his or her interests in the energy market; and/or

Significantly more likely than a typical consumer to suffer detriment, or that detriment is likely to be more substantial."

Need For Early Commitment to Radio Help Scheme

In his Introduction to the latest version of the Digital Radio Action Plan, the Minister for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries writes:

“The Government will, by the end of 2013, make a decision on whether a radio switchover is in the best interests of broadcasters, manufacturers, and most importantly consumers. This decision will provide a clear statement of the Government’s intentions and set out in detail how any future radio switchover would be funded and implemented.”

Digital radio is not the same as digital television and there are many differences in the issues raised, but inevitably TV DSO has lessons for radio DSO and it has certainly created expectations around the notion of a Help Scheme.

These expectations are held by vulnerable consumers, the organisations representing their interests, and politicians and other stakeholders with a concern in how vulnerable consumers are supported in what will be a mandatory process of switchover to a new digital device.

The Go Digital Trial and the report by Richard Collins reviewing the TV Help Scheme² underline that consumers generally saw the television switchover process as a success and a model for radio switchover. The report of the trial recommends that vulnerable consumers in a radio switchover process should be offered both financial support and face-to-face assistance with set-up

Decisions will need to be made by Government on:

- whether there will be a Help Scheme
- the groups eligible for a Help Scheme
- what those groups will be eligible for
- how that will be communicated
- how it will be delivered
- how it will be funded

Not all of these matters will need decision by the time of the ‘in principle’ decision by Government but, on the expectation that the Government will use this occasion to commit the country to switchover, **a prime recommendation of this report from the Consumer Expert Group is that, at the time of that ‘in principle’ decision, the Government should announce that there will be a Help Scheme and broadly which groups will be eligible for such targeted assistance.**

² Collins, Richard (2013), *The UK digital television switchover help scheme: how it assisted blind and partially sighted people*. A policy review. RNIB: London.

In our view, if Government does not announce at this time a firm commitment to a Help Scheme:

1. It will create suspicions that Government intends to offer less support to vulnerable consumers in respect of digital radio switchover than it did for digital television switchover.
2. It will weaken consumer acceptance of a mandatory switchover to digital radio when it is already evident from take-up figures that consumers find digital radio a less compelling market proposition than was the case with digital television.
3. It will generate pressure on consumer & citizen groups and on local and national politicians to press Government to advance detailed proposals on a Help Scheme against a timetable that may not be of Ministers' choosing.

The remainder of this paper sets out the views of the CEG as to the nature of the support package or Help Scheme which we believe should be offered to specific vulnerable consumers during the process of switchover, and it makes a series of recommendations for the Government and the body that will be implementing the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups.

If a digital radio switchover is to be successful, it will require the Government to pay careful attention to the practical needs of vulnerable listeners and our recommendations are designed to achieve this.

The detailed features of the Help Scheme – including aspects not covered in this submission – can be discussed and debated after an 'in principle' statement committing the country to switchover. After all, on current trends and projections, actual switchover will not commence until at least 2018 which gives us some five years to work out all the details.

The Initial Population for The Help Scheme For Vulnerable Groups

The Consumer Expert Group has considered carefully whether a Help Scheme for radio switchover should have the same or different eligibility than that which was used for television switchover.

In our view, there are sound reasons for having broader eligibility for radio. Therefore **our further prime recommendation is that the Help Scheme for radio switchover should be wider than for television**, but it should build upon the eligibility for the previous scheme.

The case for this cope is:

- There are international (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and national (Equalities Act & Disability Discrimination Act) requirements to provide assistance and support to disabled people.
- Disabled people often cannot use standard equipment and need specialised equipment to be provided with the necessary training and support.
- People who are older or in care are much more likely than the general population to have physical problems (such as limited dexterity) or poor mental health (such as dementia) which means that they require additional support when switching to a new technology.
- The nationwide experience of television switchover and the Bath experience of the Go Digital trial on radio switchover have both shown that vulnerable groups do require a measure of additional support for a switchover process.

Some might argue that, now that television switchover is complete, there is no need for support for a radio switchover because all digital televisions provide access to digital radio. However, we would utterly reject such a view because:

- Many consumers are simply unaware that digital radio is available on their digital television.
- Many of those who are aware of such availability of digital radio choose not to access this service in this way.
- The number of stations on a television set is more limited than the choice one can receive via a DAB set.
- There is no guarantee that Freeview for example will continue carrying all the DAB stations it carries now and, in some parts of the country, the number of radio stations has gone down to make space for other services.

- Depending on a digital television for digital radio would limit choice in the household if one member wishes to watch television while another wishes to listen to the radio.
- Crucially many consumers want to be able to carry their radio around the house, and one cannot do that with a television or a television set-top box.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises people have the right to choose the way they are communicated with and how they access information in a form which is most appropriate to them at any given time.

So the CEG is very clear that those eligible for support under the TV Help Scheme should similarly be eligible for support with digital radio switchover.

People were eligible for the Help Scheme if they met one of the following criteria:

- Aged 75 or over, or
- Have lived in a care home for six months or more, or
- Have (or could receive):
 - Disability Living Allowance (DLA), or
 - Attendance or Constant Attendance Allowance, or
 - Mobility supplement, or
- Are registered blind or partially sighted.

Note: The Government is revising a number of benefits and by the time of switchover of radio some of the benefits used for eligibility of the television scheme may have been replaced. In that eventuality, we would suggest using the appropriate replacement benefit unless eligibility for the new benefit is significantly lower. Currently the Disability Living Allowance is due to be replaced by a new Personal Independence Payment from 2013 but, since we do not know when switchover will take place, we cannot be sure of the benefit system at the time.

In Annex A, we provide indicative figures for the size of these groups as supplied by the BBC from the experience of the television Help Scheme.

The Further Population for The Help Scheme For Vulnerable Groups

However, the CEG believes that radio is a different proposition from television and this should impact the issue of eligibility under a Help Scheme.

In most cases, radio is seen as a more personal medium than television and the radio set is far more transportable than television and, in all cases it does not require a licence. Therefore, consumers needing support for radio switchover do not necessarily have to be resident in conventional households and eligibility for support should not be defined by residence.

Radio switchover will have more impact on people living on limited incomes than the TV switchover did, as neither a licence nor a fixed address is needed for a radio, making it an invaluable accessible information and communication tool for many vulnerable people who need to be included in a Help Scheme for radio.

Such groups would include:

- people with poor mental health and dementia
- people moving in and out of hospital due to poor mental health and/ or chronic illness
- young people leaving care
- people with specific and non-specific learning difficulties
- homeless people/ rough sleepers
- refuge residents who are fleeing domestic violence
- refugees and asylum seekers

In Annex B, we set out further information on the numbers and needs of these groups to inform the development of eligibility for a radio Help Scheme. There may be other groups that should be considered for inclusion in the scheme, such as prisoners.

The CEG recognises that work will need to be done on a process for identification of groups who would be part of a wider eligibility of this kind and we commit to working with Government on this.

While wishing due regard to be taken on protection of privacy, some processes for establishing eligibility that may be helpful include:

- a) using pension credits and tax credits to identify people on low incomes;
- b) establishing a register of disabled people similar to the one which exists for the blind and partially-sighted;
- c) using Access to Work records, covering five year periods;

- d) using educational and medical assessments and statements as evidence of impairment or lack of access to the written word;
- e) using local authority records to identify young people leaving care;
- f) providing help through organisations such as homelessness shelters, hostels or women's refuges;
- g) working with NHS trusts, including mental health trusts, and those which track dementia;
- h) working with organisations already providing radios to vulnerable people.

Types of Support Provided Through A Help Scheme

There is then the related matter of what the groups we propose be covered by a radio Help Scheme will actually be eligible for.

On the one hand, there is an assumption – supported by the outcome of the Bath trial - that, for most consumers, digital switchover for radio will be a simpler matter than was the case with digital switchover of television.

On the other hand, those groups that will need help because of age, impairment or circumstance will need a similar level of support to that which was received under the TV Help Scheme, including suitable equipment and training on how to use it. Some people whom we have proposed for eligibility may well need less support than others.

Precisely what form support should take in respect of each eligible group should be based on the *needs* of the different groups.

However, consistent with the Help Scheme for television, we accept that the Help Scheme for radio should be based on the provision of one set, although we recognise that most households own more than one radio. The portability of kitchen radios is a factor to be taken into account, as it allows people to move the device throughout their homes.

Means Testing For A Help Scheme

The Consumer Expert Group does not recommend a means-tested approach. We believe that a means tested approach could lead to problems in ensuring take-up of support by eligible people and we do not believe it is the fairest approach.

It is important to emphasise that some of the largest groups in the eligibility categories we propose are based on impairment with needs that have to be addressed.

While on face value a means-tested approach may appear fairer in terms of providing most benefit to those on low incomes, such an approach would have serious disadvantages.

The current benefit system for vulnerable people is extremely complicated and many find the process of navigating the benefits system a difficult one.

The Equipment for A Help Scheme

In October 2011, the Consumer Expert Group produced a paper for the Digital Radio Action Plan which set out our views on the accessibility features of digital radio equipment that are important for older and disabled people. This paper was subsequently agreed with industry and passed to the Action Plan Steering Group.

It can serve as a specification for the equipment to be provided by Government for the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups and is attached as Annex C.

The Consumer Expert Group believes that these specifications are both necessary and achievable.

We believe that Government support for these specifications could play a vital part in driving forward demand and supply for accessible digital radio technology. In the case of television switchover, we saw that equipment used by the Help Scheme – which, at the welcome insistence of Ministers, included accessibility criteria – acted as a spur to drive up accessibility standards in the industry as a whole. We would like to feel that the same experience could come from a properly designed and provisioned Help Scheme for radio switchover.

While we appreciate that technology will probably change over the timetable for switchover (although radio switchover will be quicker than television switchover), we believe that there are significant benefits to be gained from offering a support package that includes only limited choice over the type of equipment offered to vulnerable consumers, but we recognise that this single package will have to address different needs of different consumer groups. The key requirement is that each group covered by the Help Scheme receives the equipment appropriate to their specific needs.

We are aware that a voucher scheme might appeal to some consumers on convenience grounds and might appeal to Government on cost grounds, but we do not believe that the four groups of consumers eligible for the TV scheme for vulnerable groups should be offered a voucher that can be redeemed against any digital radio on the market for the following reasons:

- There is currently inadequate consumer information at point of sale about digital radio usability and accessibility.
- There would be a significant risk that older and vulnerable individuals would end up with digital radio sets that do not adequately meet their needs.
- It would make the installation and after-installation support very complex as potentially all brands and models would have to be known by the installers and helpline staff.
- Those who are geographically isolated in rural areas may be disadvantaged because of the need to travel to access nominated retailers.

However, there is a case for a limited choice for consumers in the Help Scheme, but from a small selection of accessible digital radios.

While we acknowledge the importance of individual choice, we believe it needs to be borne in mind that people eligible for a Help Scheme will have the option, if they can afford it, to purchase whatever product they choose in the High Street, just like other consumers, if they are particularly concerned to have a different digital radio set.

Of course, sound quality is not the be all and end all when it comes to vulnerable consumers; ease of use is a real concern too, including how easy the menus are to navigate and how tactile are the buttons. We would be most concerned if simple issues like these are overlooked.

It is possible to buy a DAB radio for £20, but it will sound poor and provide a very negative experience - a worrying thought for those who rely on their radios and not a good endorsement of DAB if a consumer's first experience of the system is with a shoddy product.

Vulnerable consumers need to be steered away from simply picking up the cheapest product. Research by Which?

[<http://www.which.co.uk/technology/audio/reviews/digital-radios/>]
suggests that around £80 needs to be spent for a radio that meets the needs of many of the Help Scheme client groups. It should be noted that vulnerable groups requiring specifically adapted equipment will have to pay substantially more. Standard equipment is, mostly, unsuitable for blind and partially sighted people and the sets used in the Go Digital Trial cost £230 and £164.66 respectively.

While the CEG is opposed to the notion of a voucher scheme, there might be a case for a top up scheme of a limited range of accessible equipment which would provide some financial support to certain vulnerable groups such as those on restricted incomes. Such a scheme operates for the provision of wheelchairs.

However, a top up scheme would not be suitable for blind and partially sighted people, because the equipment they need, in order to have a fully inclusive and accessible experience of using digital radio, is not available in the mainstream market. Partially sighted people need a radio with much better colour contrast and a large, more legible screen than what high street outlets sell, and blind people should ideally have a radio that gives them an audible version of any information that appears on the screen: for example a radio that tells you what station you are on or what menu option you can select.

Conclusion & Delivery of A Help Scheme

The prime purposes of this CEG submission to DCMS are to ensure that:

- an 'in principle' announcement' committing the UK to digital switchover of radio includes an 'in principle' commitment to a Help Scheme
- Government accepts that eligibility for a radio Help Scheme will comprise not just the four groups that were eligible for the television Help Scheme but the additional groups specified in this report

Once Government has decided the key parameters of a Help Scheme, one or more organisations will need to be contracted to deliver it and the CEG and its member organisations will want to work closely and collaboratively with that organisation or those organisations.

Even at this early stage, however, we would like to set out some of our expectations around the delivery of the Help Scheme and how we would like the delivery organisation(s) to operate and these ideas are set out in Annex D.

Annex A

Size Of Groups Covered By The Help Scheme For Digital Switchover Of Television

Total number of eligible persons =	9,311,088
Number of eligible persons over 75 =	6,498,573
Number of eligible persons under 75 =	2,812,515
Number of registered blind & partially sighted =	232,093
Number of care home residents=	457,943
Number of under 75s eligible by virtue of their disability (other than visual) =	2,646,022

Source: BBC

Annex B

Further Groups For Potential Inclusion In A Digital Radio Help Scheme

<u>Category:</u>	Homeless
<u>Reference</u> Government	Department for Communities and Local
<u>Lead Organisation</u>	Shelter/Joseph Rowntree
Figures:	statutory homelessness 13,890
	Temporary accommodation 52,960
	Rough Sleeping 2,309
	number of hostels/ night shelters 1,575

Background:

- Statutory Homelessness: July to September Quarter 2012 England Household acceptances
13,890 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty between 1 July and 30 September 2012, 11 per cent higher than during the same quarter of 2011.
On a seasonally-adjusted basis, there were 13,340 acceptances, a increase of 3 per cent from 13,010 in the previous quarter.
- Households in temporary accommodation
52,960 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 September 2012, 8 per cent higher than at the same date in 2011.
- On a seasonally-adjusted basis, 52,530 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 September, a 2 per cent increase from 51,520 in the previous quarter.

Joseph Rowntree: "Monitoring Poverty And Social Exclusion 2012", Hannah Aldridge, Peter Kenway, Tom MacInnes and Anushree Parekh

After years of substantial falls, the number of households recognised as homeless has been rising since 2009/10. In 2011/12, 70,000 households were recognised as homeless. Although this level remains much lower than the 2003/04 peak of 200,000, this is the second successive year-on-year increase.

Of the 70,000 households recognised as homeless in 2011/12, 50,000 were found to be in priority need, an increase of 6,000 on the year before.

The number of households living in temporary accommodation in the first quarter of 2012 was 50,000. This is half the level in 2004/05, where this number peaked at 101,000. But for the first time since 2005, the number of households living in temporary accommodation increased in 2012.

Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of households living in temporary accommodation in England live in London. A further 17 per cent live in the South or East regions. Only 8 per cent of households living in temporary accommodation in 2012 lived in the North or the Midlands

Further information:

The needs of homeless people overlap with many other needs; as noted above, 30% have been in the care system, and 40% have poor mental health. An individual's vulnerability and isolation are key factors in creating homelessness. Many homeless people rely on transistor radios in particular – which are cheap, portable and can work for a long time without charging – to keep them in contact with society while living on its edges. As with other groups, radio provides a point of stability and consistency for people moving out of homelessness, helping people maintain their tenancies and stabilising chaotic lifestyles. It is also important to note, yet again, that homeless people are usually not in receipt of benefits, meaning that alternative ways of targeting them for help scheme eligibility will have to be found.

Category:

Cancer and Life Limiting Illnesses

Reference

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Livingwithandaftercancer/EmotionalEffects/Lonelinessisolation.aspx>

Lead Organisation

Macmillan

Figures:

280,000 diagnosed with cancer each year

Background:

“One in four people diagnosed with cancer in the UK will lack support from family or friends during their treatment and recovery – that represents more than 70,000 people each year.”

This is the headline statistic from a new report by Macmillan Cancer Support, who surveyed more than 1,700 recently diagnosed cancer patients and 150 healthcare professionals who treat cancer patients. Participants were asked to talk about the social support they received during treatment, and what effect this had on their physical and emotional wellbeing.

This latest research adds to a growing evidence base demonstrating the serious and detrimental impact of loneliness and isolation on our mental and physical health. It particularly highlights the relationship between loneliness and poor health, and how isolation can have a direct influence on harmful behaviours. Key findings include:

Isolated patients were more likely to make poor treatment decisions: more than half (53%) of healthcare professionals say patients have decided to skip treatment altogether because they have no support from family or friends

Isolated patients were less like to manage their medical and personal care: More than one in six have been unable to collect a prescription for their medication and 53% have skipped meals or not eaten properly

Serious ill health increases our risk of loneliness and isolation: 80% of respondents said the financial cost of cancer means they can't afford to see their family or friends as much.

The research also identified one step that could be taken to overcome this issue: Over a third of healthcare professionals and 47% of GPs "do not always ask if a patient has support from family or friends".

Category:

Women and Children's Aid Centres

Reference

Women's Aid Federation of England Summary Annual Survey of Domestic Violence Services 2010-11

Lead Organisation

Women's Aid Federation of England (Women's Aid)

Figures:

910 separate refuge houses in England, providing at least **4,090** separate family spaces

Background:

Overall, we estimate that there are more than **910** separate refuge houses in England, providing at least **4,090** separate family spaces in total, more than 99% of which were (in the year 2010/2011) funded by their local councils through the Supporting People programme (SP).

We estimate that around **18,170 women** and **19,100 children** stayed in refuge accommodation during the year 2010/2011.

Responding refuge organisations accommodated 563 women (and their 483 children) with no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status.

Further information:

It is important to recognise that both men and women are victims of perpetrators of domestic violence and that this violence is not just physical but psychological. Individuals can become so controlled that they are completely isolated from their family and their community; they have no access to resources and they have been so groomed that they are often unable to access the support, information and help they need. Refuges often have to help people fleeing domestic violence to re-learn basic life skills like shopping or using public transport. We have heard of a case of someone over 100 seeking support. The cycles of abuse are commonly passed down through the generations. This is not a case of a couple of bruises or a little bit of psychological damage; our society, by not recognising, condemning or attempting to understand this, is condoning behaviour that is leading to the murder of two people a week. Refuges were excluded from help through the TV Help Scheme as were people moving out of refuges to re-form their lives. When personal resources are low and you have been forced into being a single parent or out of your home because society has neglected you the support, comfort and psychological benefits that a radio can bring to families and individuals fleeing domestic violence should not be belittled. The radio help scheme should allow for people who are disproportionately disadvantaged by the loss of radio because of their medium-term situations, not just long-term conditions

Category:

Young People Leaving Care

Reference

ONS sfr21-2011 v 3

Lead Organisation

NCAS

<http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/e7186fad64003f1f923d30a80243e38f.pdf>

Figures:

in 2011 3,940 in total (2,410 moved into independent living with supportive accommodation, 1060 moved into independent living with no formalised support, 470 transferred to residential care funded by adult social services.

With changes in legislation and extension of support to young people up until the age of 25, local authorities could now have leaving care duties to almost 80,000 young people (not including 'qualifying' young people).

Background:

The number of young people in and leaving care has increased. Thus local authorities have to make increasingly diminishing resources stretch to meet the needs of more young people.

- Government drives to reduce the number of placements and age of leaving care appears to be having a positive impact as fewer young people have more than three placements and more young people leave care at age 18 (rather than 16/17).
- With changes in legislation and extension of support to young people up until the age of 25 local authorities could now have leaving care duties to almost 80,000 young people (not including 'qualifying' young people)
- Despite general improvements in university participation for disadvantaged young people nationally, and the introduction of a Higher Education Bursary for care leavers in 2009, the proportion of young people in higher education at 19 has decreased to 6%.
- A third of young people at 19 are NEET, with a small increase in the proportion not in education, training and employment (NEET) for other reasons than illness and disability from 28% to 29%, mirroring a general increase in NEET figures among disadvantaged young people.
- Slight increase in number of young people returning to live with parents or relatives post care. We need to ensure this is because this is the best option for young people and they receive adequate support, not just a response to accommodation shortages.

Further information:

There can be little doubt that young people in and leaving Care are vulnerable, isolated and lacking in resources after the Oxford child grooming and sexual abuse case. Coupled with this the absence of formal school and education means literacy levels are lower than normal so the ability to access information via the written word means being able to receive information and awareness via a verbal medium is extremely important in helping break these cycles of abuse. If you are leaving Care at 16 there is no on-going support apart from a priority for Council accommodation. By 18, no support is given. This is why 30% of homeless people have been within the Care system. If you are lucky enough to get accommodation this will be unfurnished and literally 4 bare walls. You are unable to afford a television or a television licence and perhaps the only contact you have and can afford that can bring you some comfort, contact and company into your isolation so you can start to build a home and a new life is a radio.

Category:**Mental Health**

Reference
<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-statistics/>
Lead Organisation

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help->

Mind/Mental Health Foundation

Figures:

Mental health service users 1,259,650

Background:

The facts and figures around Mental Health in the UK are alarming.

1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year

Mixed anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in Britain

Women are more likely to have been treated for a mental health problem than men

About 10% of children have a mental health problem at any one time

Depression affects 1 in 5 older people

Suicides rates show that British men are three times as likely to die by suicide than British women

Self-harm statistics for the UK show one of the highest rates in Europe: 400 per 100,000 population

Only 1 in 10 prisoners has no mental disorder

1 in 4 British adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any one year, and 1 in 6 experiences this at any given time.

(The Office for National Statistics Psychiatric Morbidity report, 2001)

Although mental disorders are widespread, serious cases are concentrated among a relatively small proportion of people who experience more than one mental health problem. (The British Journal of Psychiatry, 2005)

It is estimated that approximately 450 million people worldwide have a mental health problem. (World Health Organisation, 2001)

Further information

For people with poor mental health, tendencies towards self-isolation and problems with socialising make radio a vital connection to the outside world. Many use radio as a self-management tool, to help them feel safe enough to sleep, and those who experience invasive voices have even told us that they use their radios to block these out. Most instances of poor mental health are likely to be life-long, meaning that people affected are less likely than those with physical or sensory impairment to have built up work income, savings or work-related

pensions. They also have a very high rate of unemployment, so accessing media via analogue radio is presently an economically viable option, particularly as it does not need a licence. Because people with poor mental health are often on the wrong benefits, they will need the opportunity to confirm their eligibility for the Help Scheme through other means than just benefits, such as medical certificates, doctors' letters etc.

A growing and serious problem of mental health, especially among older persons, is dementia.

Dementia does not only affect people who are over 75, or even over 60. The condition can affect people as early as their late 30s. Their long-term familiarity with radio means that it remains the main source of information and entertainment for many people affected, and also opens the risk of severe distress if this routine part of life is removed. They are also reassured by radio's structured format; for instance, 'lunchtime news' or 'Book at Bedtime' helps them know what time of day it is, providing continuity and comfort. People living with dementia are often highly affected by music, especially as it is so much easier to follow than television programmes. We now know that music affects a different part of the brain to other stimulus, and as this area can be left unaffected even when other symptoms are very strong, music is a lifeline to many dementia sufferers. It seems that the Digital TV switchover has left many people with dementia without accessible equipment. This area of poor mental health is so common and so destructive that it is imperative to preserve access to radio for people living with dementia. Because people with dementia often have problems thinking and reasoning, and distrust unfamiliar things, it will be necessary to work with existing contacts in the community – such as charity workers, local authorities, carers and GPs - to make dementia sufferers aware of the help that is available.

Category: Learning Disabilities such as Down's Syndrome, cerebral palsy, fragile x syndrome

Reference People with Learning Disabilities in England 2011 Eric Emerson, Chris Hatton, Janet Robertson, Hazel Roberts, Susannah Baines, Felicity Evison & Gyles Glover (<http://www.arcuk.org.uk/membersarea/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/IHAL-PWLD-England-2011.pdf>)

Lead Organisation Scope, Mencap

Figures:

We estimate that in England in 2011 1,191,000 people have learning disabilities. This includes

- 286,000 children (180,000 boys, 106,000 girls) age 0-17;
- 905,000 adults aged 18+ (530,000 men and 375,000 women), of whom 189,000 (21%) are known to learning disabilities services. 905,000 adults aged 18+ (530,000 men and 375,000 women)

Background:

One of the greatest barriers that people who have profound and multiple learning disabilities face is the negative attitudes of others. Judgements are made about the meaning and quality of people's lives. This can stop people being offered some of the more innovative forms of support, such as individual funding, because some people do not think that they will benefit, or they think that the costs involved are too high. But these negative attitudes can also be life-threatening – for example, if they result in medical treatment being denied. These judgements are only ever subjective. Most people do not know what it is like to have a profound learning disability and perhaps experience the world by touch and smell. Such judgements also show a failure to understand the contribution that each individual will make to the lives of the people around them.

Further information:

Due to low levels of literacy, these groups rely on auditory sources of information and entertainment, and will find it difficult to navigate new purchase decisions. Learning disabilities affect people from birth, so they generally have little access to funds earned from previous employment.

Category:

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD) Dysphasia, speech and language delay and/or deficit. Autism/Asperger Syndrome

References

http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/services/ad_living.php
<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:EOOnpH4rue4J:www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/schools-colleges-and-universities/dyscalculia.html+Dyscalculia+numbers+of+people+in+the+uk&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk>

<http://www.adhdtraining.co.uk/about.php>
<http://www.asperger.org.uk/asperger-syndrome/about-asperger-syndrome-facts.asp>
<http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/myths-facts-and-statistics/statistics-how-many-people-have-autism-spectrum-disorders.aspx>

Lead Organisations

National Autistic Society, Adult Dyslexia Organisation, British Dyslexia Association, Dyspraxia Foundation

Figures:

9,480,000 - Specific Learning Difficulties, a family of related conditions with considerable overlap or co-occurrence are believed together to affect around 15% of the population people to a lesser or greater extent

Background:

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) affect the way information is learned and processed. They are neurological (rather than psychological), usually hereditary and occur independently of intelligence. They include: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Development Co-ordination Disorder, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder.

Further Information: Due to low levels of literacy, these groups rely on auditory sources of information and entertainment, and will find it difficult to navigate new purchase decisions. Specific learning difficulties affect people from birth, so they generally have little access to funds earned from previous employment. Often, people with learning difficulties fall through the cracks with regards to disability-related benefits and tax breaks; for instance, they are unlikely to be in receipt of DLA. This means that the help scheme will need to be able to reach them through other means than receipt of benefits. This group has a specific need for information on any digital radios to be provided verbally by a human voice rather than a computer-generated one; this is because people who are dysphonetically dyslexic (more common than the purely dyseidetic form) find synthetic voices very hard to understand.

Category: People moving in and out of hospital due to poor mental health or chronic illness

A common problem for people moving into hospital is the cessation of benefits during their stay. At the end of a stint in hospital, often of unpredictable length, people depending on benefits for rent and other basic living needs can find their homes and possessions repossessed. For this reason, a cheap and transportable transistor radio is often the most accessible link with the outside world. Many people take these radios into hospital with them, as a familiar support and a distraction while undergoing treatment such as chemotherapy or dialysis. People moving in and out of hospitals often live on low incomes and will not be able to afford a new radio. Because they have benefits removed when in hospital, assessing eligibility solely through benefits received would leave them out in the cold.

Category: Refugees and Asylum Seekers

One has to recognise that refugee status is very rarely given and that refugees and asylum seekers use radio as a way of learning English, integrating, and maintaining links with their original cultural identity. Victims of torture or abuse have told us that they use their radios for reassurance when waking from a nightmare or to control other PTSD symptoms. When you haven't necessarily got access to benefits you are not in a position to resource a transition from analogue to digital, yet you still come under the Equalities Act and UN Convention, there is a need therefore for refugees and asylum seekers to be able to access a help scheme due to their situations.

Annex C

Digital Radio Accessibility: priority areas for older and disabled people.

Features and target groups identified by the Consumer Expert Group on Digital Switchover (July 2011)

Introduction

As background to this paper, the CEG wants to remind the reader of the "universal design" approach.

The "universal design" approach is well documented both at UK level and internationally in various design and standardisation reports (including CEN/CENELEC). It emphasises that all the features that facilitate usability would seem to be of benefit for everyone, as well as being an essential feature for those groups with specific accessibility needs. Problems with dexterity³, sight, hearing, and comprehension (including a lack of familiarity with how to operate digital devices) affect millions of people who will benefit from a minimum specification that takes these issues into account.

However, generally product design does not yet incorporate these elements. For example, the general lack of product design that suits older people is referenced in the recent research report *The Consumer Marketplace in an Ageing Society*, Research by ILC-UK for Age UK October 2010⁴.

Because of the lack of a universal design approach, the CEG decided to list the specific features that would make digital radio devices more accessible. The purpose of this document is threefold, with short, medium and long-term goals:

1) The short-term goal of the document is to inform the planned 2011 analysis by the Technology and Equipment Group under the Digital Radio Action Plan of the market trends regarding accessibility. This analysis should take the list of features from this document and give a RAG status to indicate whether they are likely to be delivered by the market or not. This overview should be presented to the Digital Radio Action Plan policy group. It should also indicate for each feature whether further industry implementation guidelines need to be developed to increase clarity should manufacturers wish to implement them.

2) With respect to the medium term, the document aims to better inform the digital radio manufacturing industry about the digital radio equipment needs of older and disabled people, hence sharing existing knowledge and saving the

³ Note that dexterity problems can be caused by a range of conditions such as carpal tunnel, arthritis, diabetes, just to name a few.

⁴ http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/files/pdf_pdf_155.pdf

industry the expense of doing their own user research on specific user groups. The document has been informed by an initial feedback session with industry representatives, and requirements have been grouped and phrased more clearly following their feedback.

3) Finally, the further and longer-term purpose of the paper is to give the government a list of the features that any equipment that would be part of a targeted digital radio switchover help scheme should have. This follows up on the CEG recommendation that such a help scheme would be necessary, following the experience of digital TV switchover.

This resulting document covers the main digital radio equipment features that will improve accessibility for older users, users with cognitive and memory issues, users with dexterity problems, users with restricted mobility, blind and partially sighted users and deaf and hard of hearing users.

The requirements listed are based on specific research or on the professional opinions of CEG member organisations, built through their experience of working with specific user groups. This paper also gives an indication of the target populations for the different features that are listed. Annex 1 refers to the research reports that have been published that are relevant for this area. Annex 2, 3, 4 and 5 list relevant facts and figures about the population of older and disabled people.

For the benefit of all consumers we would hope for a good level of sound quality from all radios and good battery life for portable sets to ensure that digital radio is an attractive option for consumers.

Suggestions for generalist usability requirements are listed for completeness *in italics*.

1. Buttons

1.1 The device shall have the option to easily store and pre-set radio stations via buttons, with a sufficient number of pre-sets (at minimum 5) and the retention of these pre-sets when batteries are taken out of the radio or the radio is taken off its mains connection.

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people, older people, users with dexterity problems and users with cognitive and memory issues

1.2. The physical properties of button design shall make buttons easily identifiable for the user (such as tactile markings, large size, logical groupings, using different shapes and well spaced out button layout);

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people, older people, users with dexterity problems and users with cognitive and memory issues

1.3. The position of the controls shall not negatively impact the stability of the radio

This requirement benefits older people, people with dexterity problems and blind and partially sighted people.

1.4. The button colour and button labels shall have a strong tonal contrast in strong contrasting colour. (e.g. yellow controls on charcoal equipment)

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people and older people with sight loss

1.5. The button labels shall be positioned unambiguously in relation to their button

This requirement benefits and partially sighted people, older people with sight loss, and people with dexterity problems.

1.6. Button labels and symbols for identical functions shall be consistent across manufacturers' and equipment ranges.

This requirement benefits people with cognitive disabilities and people with memory problems.

1.7 The device shall have a tactile or audible indication of button presses via tactile depression or audible clicks

This requirement benefits older people, people with a restricted sense of touch, and blind and partially sighted people.

1.8. The device shall come with a remote control

This requirement benefits people with restricted mobility and if the remote control is well designed it can be a good alternative for blind and partially sighted people.

1.9. The device shall have the facility, or can be adapted, to function with only a single (on/off) button

This feature benefits people with Alzheimer's and with certain cognitive impairments

2. Display

2.1. The physical properties of the text display (including good colour contrast and size) shall make it more readable;

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people, older people with sight loss, users with dexterity problems and users with cognitive and memory issues

2.2. Moving text on the display can be displayed in a stationary mode

This requirement benefits people with dyslexia, learning disabilities, memory and sequencing problems

3. Sound

3.1 The equipment shall offer the user the ability to adjust the tone to suit personal hearing loss through tone control button (or 'speech enhance' tone or equaliser setting)

This requirement benefits hard of hearing people and older people who are hard of hearing.

4. Functionality

4.1. The interface software design shall be such that it minimises the number of steps a user has to take to control the device and it maximises simplicity of user interaction with the device.

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people, including older people with sight loss.

4.2. The device shall have a headphone socket

This requirement benefits people with hearing loss, or who spend long periods of time confined to bed.

4.3 The instruction manual should be clear and logical and set-up procedures including connecting the lead, positioning the aerial, tuning and adjusting the volume should be simple.

4.4. Navigating menus, setting pre-sets and using EPGs and record functions should be simple and intuitive.

5. Audible feedback

5.1. The device shall provide voice output (speech feedback to confirm button presses or function alternations as well as voice output reading out information on the text display.)

This requirement benefits blind and partially sighted people and some people with cognitive disabilities.

6. Usability of radios with dedicated functions

6.1 Portable radios - manipulating the aerial and inserting and removing batteries should be simple, requiring minimum force and dexterity. Portable units should have a suitable handle/grip for lifting and carrying. The unit should feel well balanced in transit

6.2 Bedside radios – in addition to easily accessible and programmable alarm, snooze and sleep functions, the display should be dimmable to a level suiting the individual for dark ambient conditions while remaining readable.

Note: Published research reports about accessibility of digital radio:

Freeman, J. (2008). Are you really listening? The equipment needs of blind and partially sighted consumers for accessible and usable digital radio. (http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/i2_RNIB_AreYouReallyListening.pdf)
British Wireless for the blind fund (2010). Report: attitudes and opinions from Blind and Partially Sighted people into the digital switchover.

Annex D

Advice for The Delivery Organisation(s) In Respect Of A Help Scheme For Radio

The installation service for targeted assistance

The Consumer Expert Group is very concerned that the announcement of a digital radio switchover and the subsequent publicity will offer new opportunities for rogue traders and distraction burglars possibly gaining entrance on the pretence of representing an official Help Scheme. Government, local police, and trading standards officers must be on their toes to monitor local activity and must ensure that any such activity is cracked down upon.

A specific Help Scheme for vulnerable households will need to pay particular attention to matters of security to protect these households.

The Consumer Expert Group recommends that the body implementing the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups adopts the processes that were used by the digital TV Help Scheme to ensure as far as possible that any opportunity for the exploitation of vulnerable households is minimised.

The risk of being exploited may not be confined to actual visits to households. We may see nuisance calls and texts that seek to exploit the confusion of vulnerable consumers and we will need to be alive to this possibility.

Blind and partially sighted people, should receive the information in audio and in large print in addition to written communication. Audible communication works best for most blind people, as it cannot be assumed that all blind and partially sighted people would read Braille or would have a sighted assistant to read their mail.

Those consumers with specific language and learning difficulties should have communications in written, audio and pictorial formats.

Installers employed to implement the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups should have identity cards with their photograph and details in large font and a telephone number for the householder to make a verification check if they want to. They should also have the information in Braille in the same way as the CORGI ID cards do.

It would also be helpful if installers could liaise with the local police, the local trading standards department, and local voluntary agencies such as Age UK and other CEG member organisations in advance to let them know they will be operating in the area.

Given the more limited number of trusted advice sources available in rural areas, the body or bodies implementing the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups will have to ensure it attaches appropriate importance to determining the main sources of information provision and services in rural areas.

Case studies of installation have been undertaken by Wireless For The Blind and full details can be found at:

<http://www.blind.org.uk/reports/DigitalRadioSwitchoverReport.pdf>

<http://www.blind.org.uk/reports/SurveyConductedWithRecipients2013.pdf>

These studies show that, for the older blind and partially sighted people who were visited, all respondents from the study needed initial help to operate their radio. Depending on their abilities, they needed between one and four visits, mostly from a representative of the local society, BWBF or Social Services team. However, some people received help from family and friends.

The extent of the recipient's sight loss was instrumental in their capability to work the set. Those with total sight loss found it impossible without help to tune or re-tune a set.

Research undertaken by i2Media shows that voice output of button presses, functions and information displayed on the radio screen greatly increases the ability of blind and partially sighted consumers to use digital radio equipment as independently as sighted consumers. The relevant research is: Freeman, J., Lessiter, J. and Ferrari, E. (2008). "*Research report: are you really listening? The equipment needs of blind and partially sighted consumers for accessible and usable digital radio*". London, RNIB.

Installers and help line staff implementing the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups must have disability and age awareness training before helping disabled and older people. This training can be delivered by a variety of means, including face-to-face meetings or via training DVDs where the installer has to sign a declaration that he/she has watched the training material.

Finally, as regards these security concerns, we would suggest that organisations already operating with vulnerable households supplying digital radios are actively promoted by the Help Scheme.

Other support needed under targeted assistance

It is vital that the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups should be accompanied by an adequate free help line which should be available through a variety of means such as telephone, text phone, email and post.

An appropriate instruction package and user guide should also be provided. This guide should be in a number of different languages and alternative accessible formats such as audio, Braille or large print for blind and partially sighted people.

Government must ensure that both vulnerable support services and associated information provision is accessible to those who do not have English as a first language or who are unable to read English to an adequate level. Those with specific language and learning difficulties should have communications in written, audio and pictorial formats and alternative formats such as large print and audio should be provided for visually impaired consumers.

Long term support under targeted assistance

The Consumer Expert Group is concerned about how people will cope in the long term with the complexity of learning to use a new digital radio set. It is essential that there is long-term support for individuals.

Switchover installation support and home visits under the Help Scheme for vulnerable groups must remain live for at least one year after switchover has been completed, and the help line support should remain available for 18 months.

Approaching the people eligible for the targeted assistance scheme

There should be a clear duty on the Government to contact people who are eligible for the targeted assistance scheme for vulnerable groups.

The administrators of the targeted Help Scheme should, therefore, be given access to central databases to help identify people who would be eligible. Examples of databases that could be useful are:

- local authority data identifying who is registered blind or partially sighted
- free TV Licence database
- data identifying those with another severe impairment
- DWP Pension/Pension Credit database
- NHS Trusts and mental Health Trusts
- Access to Work database
- social services

It may be that access to some of these databases requires legislation and therefore we recommend that, if legislation is needed, it is planned in good time for launch of a Help Scheme.

However, we recognise that this system might not be fully fault-proof and therefore the availability of the targeted Help Scheme should be widely promoted via the following routes.

- in clear national and regional television and radio adverts, referring to a national free phone number people can ring to claim the targeted help should they not have been contacted, plus other means of contact for those with hearing loss who do not like using or are unable to use the telephone
- via publications and groups that are in touch with people eligible for the targeted help scheme, for example
- talking newspapers, local societies and RNIB publications and resource centres for blind and partially sighted people
- specialist magazines produced by voluntary sector organisations for their memberships
- publications for older people such as Saga magazine, Choice magazine, and Age UK publications
- publications for social care workers and other professionals working with disabled people
- through locations such as Age UK centres; day centres; drop in centres; older peoples forums
- through NHS and Local Health Authority publications
- specialist organisations already working in the field supplying radios to vulnerable consumers
- parish newsletters in rural areas and schemes such as Village Agents.

Ensuring high take up of the support programme

In the case of the Help Scheme for switchover to digital television, take up was much lower than anticipated. Indeed, by the end of the programme, average take up was only 19%. It is clear that family and friends supported many of those who needed assistance and that therefore such vulnerable consumers felt that they did not need to avail themselves of the official scheme.

Government will need to be careful, however, not to make too many assumptions about take up of a radio scheme based on experience of the television scheme, especially if – we have recommended – eligibility is wider with the radio scheme.

One of the major reasons for a low take up of the Help Scheme in the case of television switchover was that nationwide the switchover process took around four years and, when a region did finally switchover, typically some 90-95% of households had already made the switch because the consumer proposition was so strong and the timetable was so protracted.

In the case of radio switchover, we are assuming that the timetable for actual physical switch-off of analogue signals will be a lot shorter than for television. Also, all the evidence so far is that consumers find digital radio a less powerful consumer proposition than digital television so that, at the time of actual switchover, a higher proportion of homes will still be using analogue radios than was the case with analogue televisions.

Set against this, in the case of TV switchover, around a quarter of homes could not access digital terrestrial television until actual switchover, whereas investments in radio transmitters which are already in progress and planned will significantly increase coverage of digital radio which might drive faster take-up of digital listening.

We all need to be guided by what eligible consumers actually choose when given proper publicity about their right to receive support. The television Help Scheme administrator clearly found that the depth of support needed by those people who claimed it was substantial.

Therefore Government should monitor take-up of the targeted Help Scheme for vulnerable groups against target figures calculated on the basis of impairment prevalence and size of the older population. Particular regard should be given to monitoring people's ability to use text as it is one of the primary reasons for the importance of radio for many vulnerable people.

One problem faced by public, voluntary and private sector bodies interested in providing advice, information and support for vulnerable people is the complexity of the services many vulnerable people have to access.

Causes of, or reasons for, the failure of services to fit with vulnerable people's priorities and needs can be:

- failure to meet personal and cultural beliefs, interests and priorities;
- conflicts between the value base of old and young, professional and layperson;
- perceptions that services and their providers are patronising or discriminatory.;
- lack of choice and flexibility as to what is on offer;
- eligibility being restricted and discriminatory.

Services may be inaccessible for the following reasons:

- poor accessibility of services due to sensory, educational and mobility impairments, for example reading small text, listening to recorded messages, and accessing e-services restrict accessibility;
- practical barriers such as lack of transport or fear of crime;
- insensitive bureaucracy and complex access criteria;

- poor quality of services or anticipated poor quality of services
- psychological issues such as anxiety or depression
- older people themselves often lacking awareness of their own needs and underestimating the difficulty of conversion;
- lack of trust that some vulnerable people have of formal services;
- vulnerable people's concerns about revealing weakness or being associated with negative stereotypes;
- the fear of being considered vulnerable

Irrespective of how the final agreed eligibility criteria are defined, the Consumer Expert Group believes that there should be targets for take-up of the support package. The targets need to be set against figures for the numbers of people who are likely to be eligible for help so that progress can be monitored and assessed.

Involving Volunteers in delivering support to a wide range of vulnerable consumers

The CEG believes that volunteers will have a key role to play in delivering support to a wide range of vulnerable consumers before, at and after switchover. This includes carers.

However, if the organised voluntary and community sector is to be in a position to provide this support, it must be supported financially.

In the absence of adequate funding, the voluntary sector simply does not have the capacity to provide the extra support needed by its client groups during a mandatory switch to digital. The CEG therefore believes that the Government cannot rely on the voluntary and community sector to provide this support unless funding can be found for this aspect of the project.

Government does not generally fund voluntary sector. Even those groups that do receive government funding are not yet being funded specifically to do this particular work, and smaller community groups (in rural areas, most fall into this category) will generally not be in receipt of any Government support.

We would recommend that Government draws up a budget to facilitate the involvement of volunteers as "trusted assistants" who can visit vulnerable consumers just before and after switchover to provide peer support with using the new technology.

In rural isolated areas, finding volunteers to travel long distances might be an issue and, in both rural and urban areas, language or culture may be an issue. In such circumstances, the voluntary sector could recruit local people i.e. Parish Councils/Rural Advisors or 'community champions'.

The voluntary sector could help with contacting “hard to reach”, but would need resources to do so. Much more work would need to be done on this model (e.g. working out a recruitment and training programme, setting up a register, including Criminal Record Bureau checks as part of the activities) but, it does have potential.

We should draw on good practice examples from the experience of the television switchover programme. Local delivery should be driven by local need and it may well be that, in rural areas, there is a diverse range of delivery agents that are not always available across all areas. Information support by the voluntary sector to a wide range of vulnerable consumers

As we come closer to switchover, the voluntary sector will increasingly be relied upon for information support by its client groups. Government cannot expect that the voluntary sector will be able to provide this information free of charge. If the Government wishes the voluntary sector to provide information support in advance and after switchover, it should provide funding to support this information provision by the voluntary sector for vulnerable consumers.

Without this support, the sector will be unable to provide the information support vulnerable people will need. Examples of this specific support are the need for information in other formats and languages for certain groups who have difficulty reading English and specific information for blind and partially sighted people on how they can cope with digital radio.

Government needs to ensure that organisations already providing services in the field are also included within the information campaigns.

Information support from the supply chain

All parts of the supply chain can play a supportive role in reinforcing the messages on switchover from Government and the Help Scheme organisation(s) to consumers in general and vulnerable consumers in particular.

Manufacturers and retailers should be encouraged to support the delivery of a consistent communications message to consumers on both the overall switchover programme and the provisions of the Help Scheme.