

Relay UK provided by BT Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020

Background and objectives

The overall objective of the research is to measure the user experience of the Relay UK service and evaluate its performance against previous waves of research in 2018 and 2016 (when the service was branded as Next Generation Text / NGT).





Understand methods of access and usage patterns of Relay UK

Service experience – satisfaction, ease of use and perceived reliability

Comparison of Relay UK App with former NGT Lite App

Awareness of the service and Relay UK

Approach

Methodology

- This wave of research consisted of a 10-15 minute online survey (BSL was offered)
- Recruitment was conducted via free find through support organisations, relevant groups on social media and snowballing
- The survey was carried out in September 2020
- 225 surveys were completed

Sample

- Those who have used the Relay UK service within the last 12 months
- Users self-classified as one of the following:
 - Deaf (this includes a range of terms for example Deaf, deaf and deafened)
 - Deafblind
 - Hearing impaired (this encompasses those who would categorise themselves as hard of hearing or with some form of hearing loss)
 - Speech impaired
 - Those who are not deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired but who use the text relay service in a professional capacity or to communicate with friends or family
 - Can't hear speech over telephone
 - Can hear some speech over the telephone

Executive summary

WHAT? WHY? WHAT NEXT?

Users are calling Relay
UK less

- Less people are using Relay UK to call family and friends (76% down from 90%)) and for work purposes (81% down from 92%) due to alternative options or lack of confidence in the service
- Users are employing other widely accepted platforms, such as Skype with subtitles, email or text
- Audit the functionality and experience of competitor platforms
- Develop a USP outside of the platform; innovate the service to keep up with user expectations of technology

Users are less satisfied with the service, with a larger portion now feeling apathetic about the service

- While there are more people 'very satisfied' (40%)
 with the service, 16% have slid from satisfied to
 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', particularly those
 who have used the service for 1+ years who become
 impatient with the services limitations
- Smartphone users in particular are dissatisfied, accustomed to faster capabilities and being in control of their experience

- Prioritise quick wins and commit to long term product road map developments Barriers include: calls dropping, inaccurate spelling, inability to effectively use IVR or conference calls
- Provide device specific, step-by-step trouble-shooter guides. Promote the high satisfaction of those who call the Helpdesk to encourage use of support services

Use of the Relay UK Service

Overall, the Relay UK service continues to provide invaluable support to users on a practical and profoundly emotional level, and within many different contexts. The independence and freedom it provides create life changing opportunity



"It gives me back my independence and self esteem. I used to hate having to rely on my husband to make "business" phone calls for me but I didn't hear well enough to make those calls myself. Now I can. It's liberating."

Relay allows me to conduct 'business' style conversations accurately, effectively and, crucially, securely.



"It is a lifeline."

"The independence this service gives to me is immense...it also keeps me safe when out and about in the community/travelling. It enables me to do a job I love and remain employable."



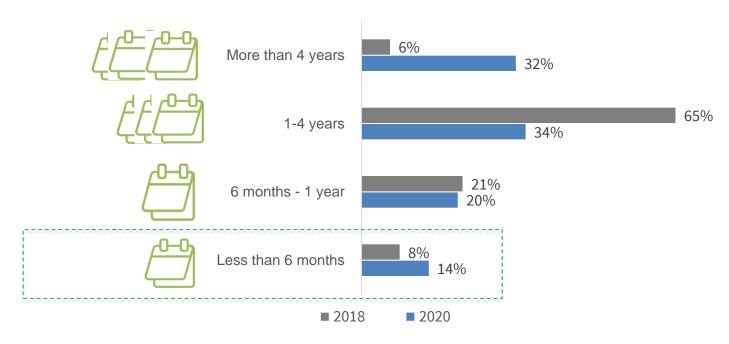
"It gives me freedom to speak to anyone I need."

"It avoids the panic I feel when trying to use the telephone particularly when contacting businesses."

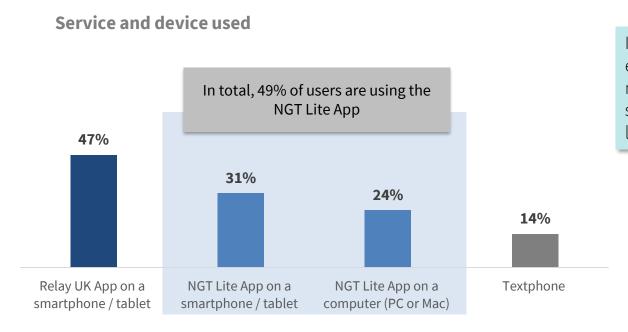
"It gives me total independence."

"It enables me to reach people whose offices are restricted on line from email or text contact. That's why I use relay, to speak to bank, insurance companies, government offices. Positively, there has been a slight increase in those joining the service compared to 2018. It is important to set new users up for long term success on the onboarding process, and that they are confident using support resources before it becomes a need

Length of time using the Relay UK service



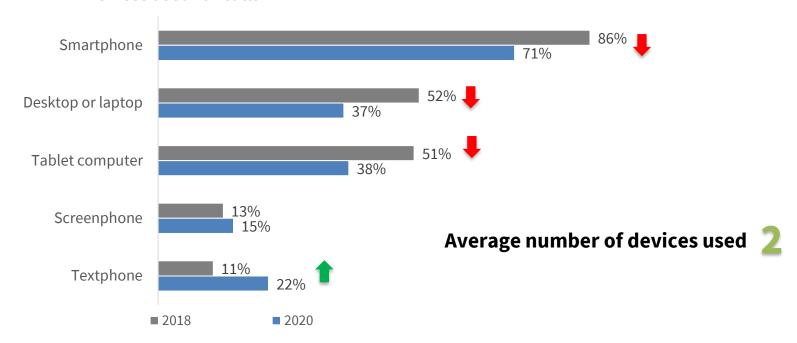
For context 47% are using the Relay UK App. 1 in 2 of total users (49%) are still using the NGT Lite App and some report having difficulty migrating over to Relay UK which may put off other users



It is important to learn from the experiences of those who have migrated from NGT Lite App specifically, which will be covered later.

Smartphones remain the most commonly used device to access the service. Despite a dip in use across all devices, 83% of those who have been using the service for a shorter amount of time (less than 2 years) use a smartphone. This signals the importance of future-proofing the phone application in particular

Devices used for calls





People are using the service less than 2018, with only 1 in 10 using everyday. The use of the service for work related calls and calling friends and family have declined in particular

Who Relay UK users are communicating with Frequency of using the Relay UK service 44% Work/colleagues Everyday 81% 12% At least once a 91% 46% week, but not 90% 51% everyday 10% 90% Less than once a Friends and/or week 38% family 76% **2018** 2020 **2018 2020**



Significant difference compared to 2018



A lack of confidence in the service's reliability discourages uses from employing Relay UK for work related calls

Barriers for use in a work setting:

- Calls dropping out
- Negatively reflects the users professional image
- Inability to use the service in conference calls

It is essential that Relay UK understands the specific needs of those using the service within a work context and provides targeted support to best support them.

"I use it only at work. I don't feel confident that it presents a professional image of me. The regular breakups of the services doesn't fill me or users with confidence. In fact I avoid using as much as possible only using when I have to!"

"Stop it from cutting out - it is too unreliable to use for work/business calls."

"It also cannot be used for work conference calls. I once got told off by the operator for trying to connect to a conference call and that text relay cannot support conference calls. I had literally no other option left to me, which made my work life very difficult having to explain to my boss text relay isn't possible for conference calls."



The decrease in use is most significantly seen in calls to friends and/or family and users report using alternative means of communication

Anecdotally, users are comfortable using other platforms to contact friends and family. These platforms do not require a special service, and their friends and family regularly use themselves already.

This indicates that Relay UK lacks a unique selling point to those who previously used the service to call friends and family.

It is vital for Relay UK to understand how it measures up to other services on the market that enable users of all abilities, and how users compare the experience. "I don't use it for friends or family as I can contact them in other ways - WhatsApp, text, email, etc."

"I don't like the service, prefer Skype with subtitles."

Watermelon



While use of Relay UK to call services remains stable, users report specific pain points when on these calls

Barriers to using Relay UK to contact services:

- Effectively using menu options (IVR)
- Long call queues which tie up the time of operators
- A lack of understanding around the Relay UK system which result in being hung up on or confidentiality issues

"When phoning most businesses you usually have to wait In a queue, often for a long time, for someone to take your call. I feel a certain amount of pressure not to hang on for very long as I'm aware that this keeps the operator from helping other people to make Relay UK calls."

"Services that you call don't always know about the relay service and hang up or refuse to discuss certain topics."

There is an emerging trend to be aware of that users do not feel confident in the technological relevance of the service or that it is taking advantage of more advanced technology

The service risks being made obsolete by more user-friendly, widely accepted services such as video calling services that use subtitles (Google Hang Outs, Skype), and messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. Many services now offer online chat help and bookings also.

"With Automatic Speech Recognition now being used widely, we still have to use a service which can only transcribe 60 words a minute which means conversations takes 5 times the length they need to."

"The service has not improved nor kept pace with technology developments generally. In the past 5 months, the entire world has moved on-line so this service seems archaic in comparison."

"Faster transcription of speech - very slow compared to STTR services."

This trend signals a growing impatience with technology that doesn't keep up with expectations. As users become more adept to new technologies, especially given the advent of working from home there is a risk that they will continue to use other services that meet they needs better or are more widely accepted.

Service satisfaction

The 2020 Satisfaction score should be considered within the context of COVID-19 and the impact this had on Relay UK and its users

COVID-19 impacted the service that Relay UK was able to provide users, particularly from the start of lockdown and into April. Below is the messaging that Relay UK issued at the time to address increased wait times in connecting to the service:

"We'd like to reassure all Relay UK users that the safety and welfare of our customers and colleagues is paramount during the coronavirus pandemic. As your Relay provider, we're committed to trying to make sure our service and support remain available for you at all times.

We've put measures in place so that we can deal with any issues arising as a result of the outbreak, and are continuing to monitor developments closely so we can react appropriately.

We saw a sharp increase in call volumes at the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak. During this busy period our teams were giving priority to connecting 999 emergency calls – including Relay 999 calls – meaning that wait times increased for connecting standard Relay UK calls. After an initial spike, our call volumes have now returned to be in line with our usual volumes, and we're unaware of people continuing to face issues accessing the Relay UK service. If we do see further spikes in call volumes we will continue to update guidance here.

What does this mean for you?

Relay UK plays a key part in the critical national infrastructure of the UK to support people with hearing loss or speech difficulties contact others on the phone. The Relay and many other services, are likely to be stretched at times as more people access them.

Our business continuity and incident management plans include maintaining critical business processes as our first priority. We have certain responsibilities to support the UK Critical National Infrastructure whatever the incident or emergency."

It is likely that the delays experienced during lockdown negatively impacted the Satisfaction score. If so, Relay UK must continue to proactively seek to rebuild the trust of users

Provision of service during COVID-19 pandemic

- There were positive comments about the continued provision of service during lockdown.
- Some open comments mention increased delays attributed to the reduced number of available operators.
- Those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the service are more likely to be regular callers (several times a week) so it is highly likely that they were impacted by the delays.
- It is possible that the experience of callers to Relay UK mirrors that seen with customer service agents in other sectors:
 - Patience was high with customer service operators at the start of lockdown and many people were impressed that the service was maintained.
 - However later in lockdown this patience wore thin, and callers felt that any delay or expectation not met by customer service staff was avoidable, despite the situation.

"The way it has been helpful in lockdown."

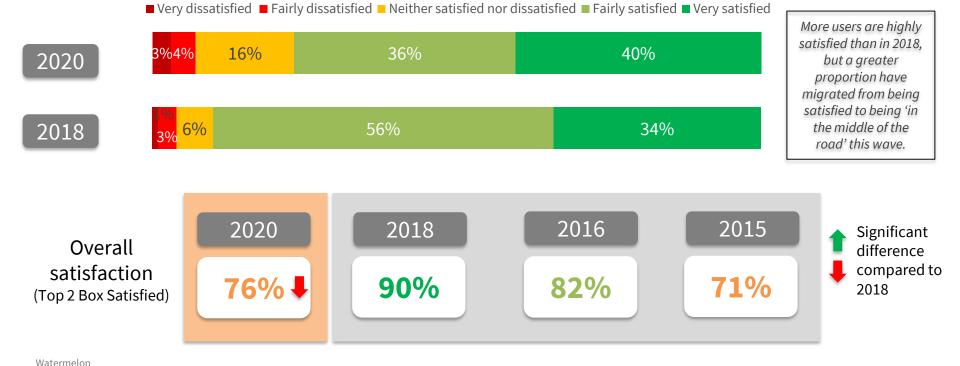
"Because even with lockdown I can rely on Relay UK every time I need a phone call."

"But they [operators] are so overstretched now, especially since COVID-19 outbreak and of course all phone lines are busy... Generally it feels that more staff is needed. I have waited four minutes or so for an operator to join the call, and of course called party has hung up, but operator will immediately redial for me. They provide an essential excellent service that I totally rely on, it has literally been a life saving service with a 999 call.. please employ more staff."

"The app needs to be more reliable - at present I use it as a last resort as I cannot trust it to work smoothly. During the pandemic there was a shortage of relay assistants and it became very difficult to use the service."

Overall satisfaction with the Relay UK service has dropped significantly compared to 2018. It is important to improve the perceptions and experience for the large number who are neither satisfied or dissatisfied and who potentially use the service out of necessity rather than preference

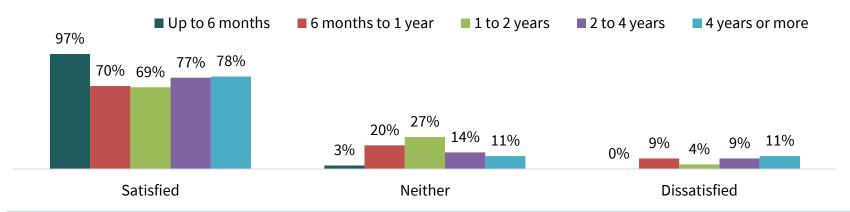
Overall satisfaction with Relay UK / NGT Service





New users are the most likely to be satisfied, indicating that the service's onboarding process is effective, but does not set users up for long term success

Overall satisfaction by length of use



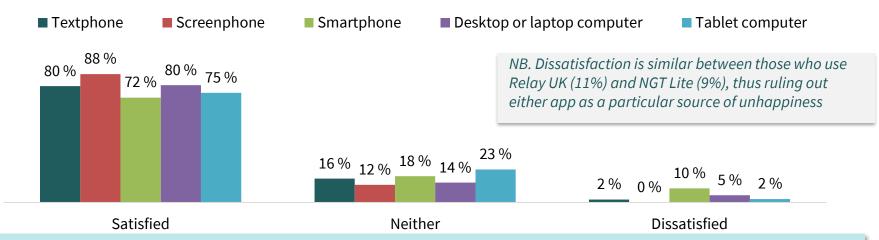
So what? The onboarding process should set realistic expectations about what users can expect from the service.

- Encourage users during onboarding to seek out opportunities they have to use the service and ingrain the service in everyday life.
- Proactively ensure they are aware of and comfortable using troubleshooting resources and Helpdesk services
- Target those using the service for 1+ years to help them get the most out of the service. Promote trouble shooter guides and tips that cater for specific uses of the service so it feels relevant to their needs



Smartphone and tablet users are the least satisfied among devices used, with tablet users being the most likely to be apathetic toward the service (23%) and smartphone users being the most dissatisfied (10%)

Overall satisfaction by device used



So what? Address specific pain points and technical glitches experienced by smartphone users, given it is the most common device used to access the service.

- Create device specific trouble shooter guides with step-by-step instructions and proactively promote these so users feel empowered and confident to overcome any hurdles; ensure users are aware of the Helpdesk
- Understand how users compare other phone/tablet platforms to Relay UK and what can be learnt from their experience on these platforms

Overall, 36% are more satisfied with the system compared to 12 months ago. Those who can note specific improvements tend to be have used the service for 4 or more years and can positively compare it to what service used to be like

Change in satisfaction in past 12 months

More satisfied **36%**

Stayed the same **51%**

Less satisfied **9%**

Recent bug fixes are appreciated

"A recent update to the app fixed an annoying text issue."

Once a week, 6 months to 1 year

The service is faster and more reliable than earlier iterations

"Calls cut off less."

Once a month, 4 years or more

"Relay ops seem to be able to join the call quicker than previously."

Several times a week, 4 years or more

"Seems Relay UK getting more better service than years ago, slow connecting to operators or slow typing voice calls. So now more normal messages and quicker to connect to Relay UK operator."

Uses the service once a month, using for 2 – 4 years

Almost 1 in 10, (9%) feel less satisfied with the service in the past year. This group are frustrated by the service's limitations and technical glitches. Work needs to be done to keep up with the speed that user's expect technology to advance and live up to their requirements of the service

Change in satisfaction in past 12 months

More satisfied **36%**

Stayed the same 51%

Less satisfied **9%**

Disappearing functionality

Slow to connect and operate

Being cut-off, experiencing technical glitches and having to re-start the call

Inconsistent quality from operators – spelling, the information they capture and convey

Inability to operate menu options on calls

"The screen disappears during a call leaving me without text to read." Several times a week, 6 months to a year

"The keyboard keeps disappearing." Once a week, 1 to 2 years

"It is very slow and I have had lots of people hang up on me as a result." Several times a month, 1 to 2 years

"Does not work if the number being called has a menu, delays have become longer, and even get asked something like is your call important do you wish to hold."

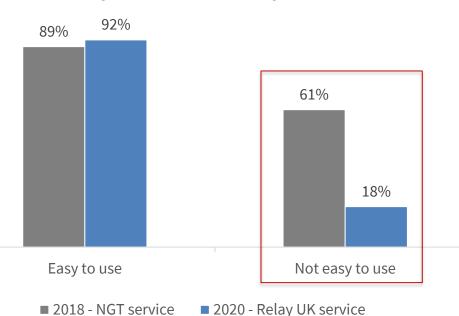
Less than once a month, 6 months to 1 year

"Longer to connect calls, more likely to be 'cut off' mid call, newer staff mistyping/misspelling things, typing too slowly or missing out important information from the other person. Service has declined since introduction of Relay UK app which does not work on my Samsung S8 smart phone."

Several times a week, 4 years or more

Ease of use is a vital contributor to overall Satisfaction. The significant change in satisfaction of those who find the service difficult to use (compared to 2018) signals an emerging trend in user expectations that Relay UK must take notice of

% who are satisfied with service – broken down by whether they find the service easy or difficult to use



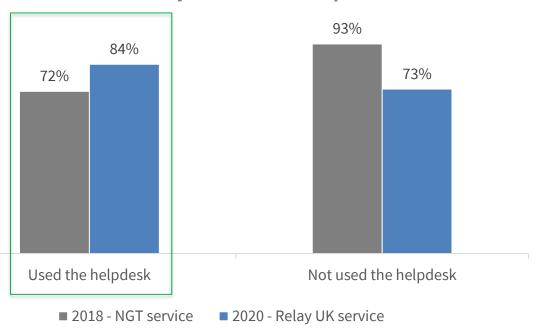
As users integrate more technology into their lives, they have higher standards when it comes to the usability of technology, and lower patience with tech that falls below expectations.

So what?

- It is vital that Relay UK solves common glitches that cause the service to be difficult to use
- Create device specific trouble shooter guides and workarounds
- Promote the Helpdesk to increase ease of use

Satisfaction with the service is higher among those who contacted the Helpdesk in 2020. Encourage users to take advantage of the helpdesk service to resolve issues and queries to improve their experience and confidence with the service

% who are satisfied with the service – broken down by whether or not they contacted the helpdesk



Users who are actively engaged with the service tend to contact the Helpdesk more.

So what? How can the service be better promoted across channels that irregular users may frequent to ensure they are empowered to use the service also?

Watermelon

Ease of use has dropped. Consider how the service can be improved specifically for smartphone users who find the service more difficult. Positively, those who contacted the helpdesk are more likely to report higher ease of use than those who did not

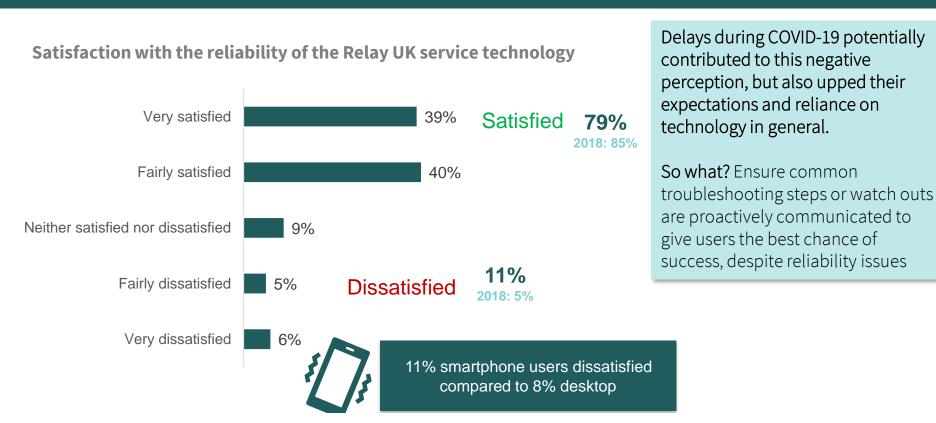
Ease of using R Easy 76% 2018: 87%	elay UK service	Diffic 8% 2018:3	
36%	40%	16%	6% 2%
■ Very easy ■ Fairly easy ■ N	Jeither easy nor difficult ■ Fairly d	ifficult ■Ver	y difficult

Easy to use	Difficult to use
18%	69%
53%	39%
87%	5%
70%	9%
	18% 53% 87%



Smartphone users are more likely to find the service difficult to use (10%) compared to desktop/laptop (3%) or tablet (4%) users. They tend to experience more technical glitches, delays and dropped calls than other devices, but are potentially also more sensitive given they are accustomed to a certain responsiveness of the smartphone

Users are less satisfied with the reliability of the Relay UK technology, with dissatisfaction particularly driven by smartphone users who are used to fast responsiveness



While satisfaction for certain aspects of the service has dipped, the drop is not as dramatic as overall satisfaction. The speed at which the assistant joins the call could be improved, particular among smartphone users (10% dissatisfied) who are potentially accustomed to fast activity when using their phone

Satisfaction with specific service aspects



Spelling of the text typed by the relay assistant

80%



How quickly the relay assistant joins your call

77%

2018: 82%



How quickly the relay assistant relays the conversation

83% 2018: 85%

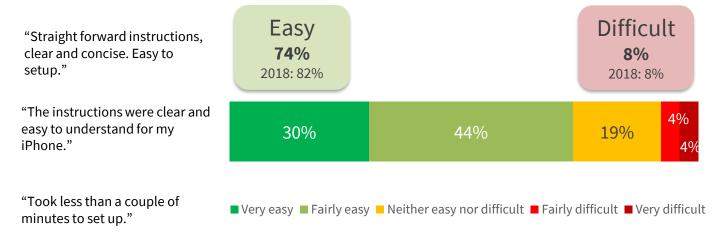


The reliability of the Relay UK service technology e.g. no error messages or the software freezing

79% 2018: 85%

Despite a small base size it is worth mentioning that 74% of users who had **not** used the NGT Lite App previously, found the Relay UK App easy to set up. Some specific aspects that tripped users up was how to link devices, or that their phone was unresponsive e.g. buttons not working

Ease of setting up the Relay UK service



"I found it quite complicated to link my mobile phone and my iPad."

"I failed first time as I didn't realised I need to have notifications to click on."

"I tried this in September last year with the assistance of Durham Deafened Support, but it proved impossible to get the app to work on a new Android phone; one of the buttons remained inactive."

"It took me a bit of time to know that it had taken over from NGT which I had used successfully for many years, but now I'm getting more confident with Relay."

NB. Small base size n=30

Satisfaction for this group in all areas is high, especially the call experience (93%). It is important to set these users up for long term satisfaction, given their positive first impressions

NB. Small base size n=30

Satisfaction with specific service aspects



Functionality of the app

87%



The call experience

93%



Ease of using the app

87%



Transfer of conversation

90%

Exploring specific Delights and Pain points







Overall - the Relay UK service is praised for it's helpful and diligent operators. The convenience and freedom the service provides is fiercely valued

Strong appreciation for the operators and the caring, professional service they provide

"The way the operator will try to help with any problem."

"The assistants are helpful and do their best even when the conversation is quite complicated. I use the service for bank calls, solicitor calls, John Lewis customer service, and recently for PIP."

Convenience using the app when out and about and on demand

"Being able to phone from anywhere and not being stuck with a minicom which can only be used at home."

"Most I like that I use the service at any time and on any day."



Standardise operator quality and call experience

Negative operator experiences:

- Changing operator during the call
- Poor spelling
- Inconsistency across operators
- Delays in call pick up, that result in being hung up on
- Words or content the operator doesn't know conveyed inaccurately
- Intrusive manner during the call that makes the caller feel embarrassed to use the service

"Standards vary from operator to operator. Speed of pick up of call from operator."

"Do not keep changing Relay Assistant half way through a conversation."

"It often takes a while for an operator to come on line, by which time the person on the other end has hung up, especially if they are not used to the service."

"Operators should type out what they hear phonetically and leave it to the deaf user to intervene if clarification needed."

Users have come to expect efficient and effective service from Relay UK in order to complete everyday tasks.

Ensure training programmes stringently maintain a high standard in all areas and that operators are aware of significant role they play in the lives of users

- Keep the same operator throughout a call
- Maintain a high standard of spelling and typing accuracy
- Speed up the pick up of calls or ensure callers expectations are carefully managed as to the wait time and potential workarounds for this
- Ensure the quality of service is consistent across all operators
- Train operators to professionally and accurately convey the meaning of what is being said



Limitations that negatively impact the use of Relay UK when contacting services and work related calls

These problems are currently addressed on the Relay UK website, however they significantly hinder the service's continued use and future uptake, particularly for use in connecting users to essential services:

- Wider knowledge and acceptance of the service
- Wider acceptance of the call prefix
- Ability to use automated call menus
- Inability to participate in conference calls
- Reduce delays by minimising operator time spent in call queues to reduce the burden on the service

Regarding measures that Relay UK already undertake to improve acceptance of the service, how can these be better communicated with the community?
Understanding how Relay UK is championing the cause will provide peace of mind and trust in the service.

Can Relay UK (or in partnership with a tech company such as Google) create a tech enabled solution for organisations and companies to purchase (many of which may have practical requirements to improve accessibility and inclusivity which this would contribute to)?

Can Relay UK petition companies to provide a dedicated line for call queues?



While users understand the service's limitations, they still feel negatively impacted

"That more people understood the service, as some people put the phone down."

"I have found that some companies and even hospitals will not accept the 18002 prefix on their telephone system." "It does not work with automated call centres. By the time the operator types everything (press 1 for X, 2 for XX etc), all the options have gone and the call has connected to the last one. Often the operator has to ask you what you want and redial from the start."

"It needs much wider awareness among normal-hearing phone users especially businesses and organisations. From this, it would also be helpful if more facilities were then set up by such organisations to allow dedicated lines to avoid having to tie-up a Relay assistant in a queueing system."



Specific technical pain points

Consider which of these are potential quick wins. For more complicated issues, transparently communicate plans to address these and ensure users have access to troubleshooting steps and workarounds in the meantime to encourage continued use

- Keep text on screen for the duration of the call
- Add paragraphs to text to aid readability
- Reduce the impact of the connection tone
- Resolve bugs which remove functionality, or what is being typed
- Detect incoming calls
- Improve pick up time for incoming calls
- The ability to connect the operator first, and then the recipient to remove the chance of the call being dropped
- Improve ease of picking up incoming calls

"Incoming relay calls (18002) should be automatically detected prompting automatic opening of Relay UK app."

"Often the relay app will stop working - the relay assistant is still on the call, but they are not able to see what I am typing, and I cannot see what they are typing (which makes calls impossible). This seems to happen 1. at random and 2. when rerouted through switchboards (e.g. when calling hospitals/DWP helplines)."

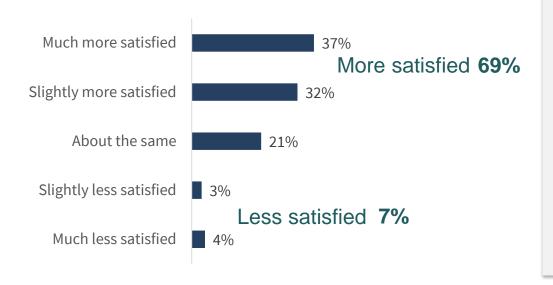
"Please make it easier for incoming calls to be picked up, it's very difficult for a relay assistant to join a call that is being received by my phone."

"I really dislike the shrill, high pitched tone that plays when the call is connecting to the relay service - this is extremely uncomfortable when amplified by hearing aids and causes discomfort and pain."



The majority (93%) are either as satisfied or more satisfied with the Relay UK App in comparison to the former NGT Lite App. Particular improvements noted in the Relay UK App is the ability to link devices and usability

Satisfaction with the Relay UK App compared to NGT Lite App



Improved ability to link devices

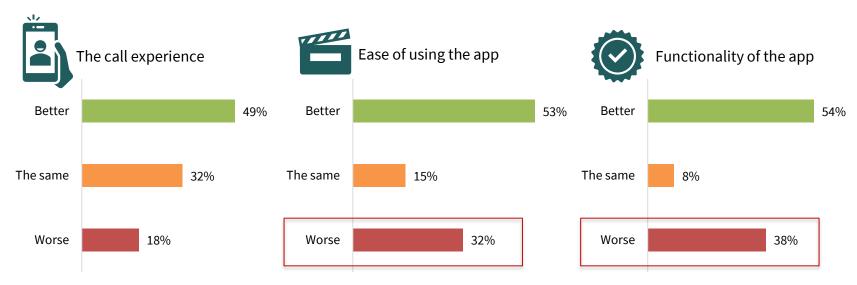
"More easier to setup and link my mobile or on laptop than old app."

Smoother process

"When making or receiving a call the whole process is easier and smoother with the Relay UK App. With the NGT Lite App it sometimes took a few attempts before your call went through to the Text relay operators."

While over half (53%) of those who also used the NGT Lite App think the Relay UK App is easier to use and has better functionality (54%), at least 1 in 3 think there is room for improvement in both of these areas

How the Relay UK App differs from the NGT Lite App





Address pain points with the Relay UK App in order to encourage NGT Lite users to migrate to the new app

Specific pain points for those who have migrated:

- Inability to connect if both Apps are on the same device
- Difficulty typing
- Missing functionality e.g. GA and call transcript
- Inability to detect incoming calls
- Feeling that bugs and complaints are not acknowledged
- Inability to prepare before the call

Reports of dissatisfaction with the new service has put off some who remain on the NGT Lite App.

Communicate the value and benefits of the Relay UK App, so users feel are encouraged to try it.

Solve bugs and reinstate lost functionality, or provide practical workarounds and step by step trouble shooters to lessen the frustration and sense of loss.



In their own words – pain points of those who have migrated from the NGT Lite App

"No printout/transcript of the call is sent to your phone/device after the call has ended. This is vital and needs to be fixed immediately. The person receiving the call cannot 'G.O.' which means they often have to sit and listen 10 minutes of speech at a time without the ability to interrupt. That is absolute rubbish and needs to be fixed. Particularly bad taken together with the fact that we get no printout sent to our phones afterwards. If someone has spoken for 10 minutes you cannot remember it all. These 2 things combined are absolutely infuriating and one of the reasons I avoid using the service."

"Very different, NGT Lite always remember 'GA' or 'SKSK', Relay UK, automatic enter that's all."

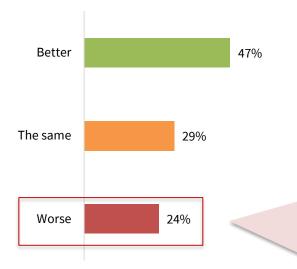
"Can no longer use it. New system seems to cancel out old one. Can't connect on either. Other people I ask have said same. Very hard to use system."

"Whilst Relay UK app is generally more user-friendly than NGT Lite, it still lacks capability in detecting incoming relay calls which result in time wasting by trying to answer non-18002 calls."

"When I'm trying to type every time I press the space bar the word jumps up to the conversation when I've not finished typing my sentence."

"I am unable to prepare what i want to say ready for when the caller has joined the line. Being able to type out a paragraph i.e. introduction is really helpful especially if the caller on the end of the line is unfamiliar with the use of Relay UK." Three quarters think the transfer of conversation is the same or better than NGT Lite. For the quarter (24%) who think it is worse, improve typing accuracy and introduce paragraphs to aid readability

The transfer of conversation (word-by-word)



Poor speed and accuracy

"Not always accurate."

"No improvements in the speed of word transfer - it is not unreasonable to expect improvements to be made when an app is updated."

Lack of paragraphs to aid readability

"There is no break in the text that appears on the screen, making it more difficult to read."

"Very confusing when each word is separate on the screen on its own line, not in sequence like the NGTS Lite."



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