BT Next Generation Text Service: Annual Report

October 2018
Headline summary

- Underlying call volumes have remained broadly static compared to last year, but there was an artificially large increase in calls between June and September as a result of 'fraudulent' (voice to voice) usage of the 18002 access code
- Average call durations are slightly higher than a year ago
- The percentage of calls made using the NGT Lite app versus traditional methods such as Textphones, has continued to increase and had reached 50% by September 2018
- KPIs were met consistently during the year with the exception of:
  - Average voice to text transcription accuracy. This was slightly below target in five of the months up to April, reflecting an ongoing programme of upskilling new Text Relay Agents across multiple sites where NGT calls hadn't previously been handled. A thorough review and update on training process and content, along with an increased focus on quality has enabled this target to be met in all months from May
  - % standard relay calls abandoned in July and August, along with the number of calls handed over in August – both were narrowly missed as a result of the very large increase in 'fraudulent' 18002 calls presented to Text Relay Advisors during these months (call volumes were 40% and 68% above average in July and August respectively)

Confirmation of Delivery against General Condition 15.5 criteria

A Relay Service provided by the Communications Providers to its Subscribers pursuant to paragraph 15.3 must:	
• Provide facilities for the receipt and translation of voice communications into text and the conveyance of that text to the terminal of End-Users of any provider of Publicly Available Telephone Services and vice versa	✓
• Provide facilities for the receipt and transmission of voice communications in parallel with text communications, allowing both channels to work in tandem to deliver near synchronous voice and text	✓
• Provide facilities for access to Emergency Organisations	✓
• Subject to General Conditions 3 and 13.1, be available for lawful use by End-Users at all times	✓
• Be capable of being accessed by End-Users of the service from readily available compatible terminal equipment, including textphones, Braille readers, personal computers and mobile telephones	✓
• Not prevent End-Users from communicating with other End-users of other approved Relay Services	✓
• Provide facilities to allow End-Users, who because of their disabilities need to make calls using a Relay Service, to receive incoming calls via the Relay Service, without the calling party needing to dial a prefix	✓
• Insofar as reasonably practicable, allow for communication between End-Users of the service at speeds equivalent to voice communications	✓
• Take measures to ensure the confidentiality of communications between End-Users of the service	✓

In accordance with our requirement to comply with full accountability and transparency regarding the performance of the NGT service, details of the Approval Criteria and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are included below.

Ofcom's formal approval of BT's NGT Service is available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-2/text-relay-service/statement

Approval Criteria and KPIs

Ability of the relay service to meet the requirements of General Condition 15.5	Further details of formal approval of BT's NGT Service can be found at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-2/text-relay-service/statement
• The relay service provider must provide an NGTR service fulfilling the relevant requirements in General Condition 15.5	BT confirms continued accessibility to NGT for textphone users, along with the confidentiality of caller communications, appropriate network resilience and priority access to the emergency services for relay calls within its network.[1]
• The provider must ensure that in its NGTR service calls to the emergency services are prioritised and provided by a resilient network and system	
• Conversations facilitated by the relay assistant should only be recorded, or parts of the conversation noted, where required for justifiable operational reasons e.g. an emergency call; cases of criminal activity, for quality measurement training	

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[1] Extracted from Ofcom's 6th March 2014 statement: Next Generation Text Relay - Approval of a text relay service

Approval Criteria and KPIs

Guarantees regarding the operational effectiveness of the relay service	
• The provider must ensure there are sufficient funds, facilities and staff to provide the relay service and enable it to perform properly the administrative and technical work associated with the tasks for which it has been appointed	Details of BT's Text Relay performance is published on the [NGT website](#). Financial information about BT is included in our [published Annual Report](#)[2]. We staff the BT NGT service to ensure we meet the PCA target and the other relevant KPIs. BT also ensures there is sufficient physical infrastructure to accommodate staff, technical systems and expansion should this become necessary.
• The provider must ensure that staff are appropriately and adequately trained especially in the communications needs of deaf, hearing impaired, speech impaired and deafblind textphone users	
• The provider must ensure that the systems have sufficient technical resilience and back up resources to provide an uninterrupted service to the same extent as the voice telephony networks to which it is interconnected	
• The provider must ensure that users receive call progress announcements in voice for hearing users and in text for hearing impaired users	
• The provider must ensure that adequate measures are in place to ensure that the relay service is inter-operable with other approved relay services (where applicable) such that end-users are able to use the service to communicate with users of other relay services	BT is currently the only approved provider of Next Generation Text Relay in the UK. BT has implemented the NGT service in accordance with UK telephone communications interoperability standards. Should Ofcom approve another NGTR service, interoperability with the BT NGT exists where this is feasible, subject to the technically and interoperable capability of the new service.

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[2] http://www.btplc.com/Sharesandperformance/Annualreportandreview/2018summary/

Approval Criteria and KPIs	
KPIs	***Conclusions on approval criterion 3*** *A2.17 BT has informed Ofcom that its proposed NGTR service will be capable of satisfying the KPIs set out in figure 2 on an ongoing basis (as it must). Having reviewed all of the information and undertakings provided, subject to consultation responses, we provisionally consider that this criterion is satisfied. We will work with BT as it develops the ways to monitor staff performance and will monitor BT to ensure the changes take place and are published. We will also monitor the performance of the service against the KPIs on an ongoing basis.[3]*
• The provider must ensure that it and the NGTR service it provides are capable of satisfying on an ongoing basis the required KPIs, including that it is adequately staffed at all times	See table 1 at Annex 1 of this document.

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[3] Extracted from Ofcom's 6th March 2014 statement: Next Generation Text Relay - Approval of a text relay service [http://media.ofcom.org.uk/news/2014/ofcom-approves-bts-next-generation-text-relay-service/]

Approval Criteria and KPIs

Accountability and transparency regarding the performance of the service	***Conclusions on approval criterion 4*** *A2.23 BT has confirmed that it will meet each of the requirements under this criterion. On that basis, subject to consultation responses, we provisionally consider that the requirement of accountability and transparency regarding the performance of BT's proposed service is satisfied. Further, on the basis of the information and undertakings BT has provided to us, our provisional view is that the proposed NGTR service will be capable of meeting the approval criteria on an ongoing basis (as it must).*[4]
• The provider must publish and make available to Ofcom, every quarter, detailed and transparent reporting on its operation, based on the KPIs • The provider must publish an annual report covering compliance with these approval criteria and any related issues directed by Ofcom	Quarterly KPI reports for the latest four quarters along with the current NGT Annual Report are published on the NGT Website.
• The provider must have a complaints handling procedure in place – to be agreed by Ofcom – and ensure complaints are handled in a fair and timely manner	The BT NGT complaint handling procedure is published on the NGT website under the Complaints section[5]
• The provider must carry out customer satisfaction surveys at least every two years	The BT NGT service launched in October 2014. BT carried out customer satisfaction research during September 2016 and September 2018.
• The provider must satisfy all elements of the criteria set by Ofcom for approval on an ongoing basis. Failure to satisfy all elements, once approval has been given, may result in the withdrawal of approval by Ofcom	Ofcom confirmed BT's compliance with General Condition 15.3[i] and 15.5[ii] in March 2015.

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[4] Extracted from Ofcom's 6th March 2014 statement: Next Generation Text Relay - Approval of a text relay service [http://media.ofcom.org.uk/news/2014/ofcom-approves-bts-next-generation-text-relay-service/]
[5] https://www.ngts.org.uk/help/complaints.html

ANNEX 1:   **BT NGT REPORTED KPIs**

Table 1 - Key Performance Indicators: October 2017 to September 2018														
Measure	**Target**	**Actual Achieved**												
		Oct-17	**Nov-17**	**Dec-17**	**Jan-18**	**Feb-18**	**Mar-18**	**Apr-18**	**May-18**	**Jun-18**	**Jul-18**	**Aug-18**	**Sep-18**
Standard relay calls answered within 15 seconds	90% on average	91.2%	93.3%	92.4%	93.1%	92.0%	91.2%	93.5%	90.4%	90.3%	91.1%	94.7%	90.2%
	85% per 15 minute interval[6]	90.5%	92.0%	90.9%	91.5%	90.3%	90.6%	92.5%	87.9%	86.7%	85.0%	91.3%	85.9%
Emergency relay calls answered within 5 seconds	95%	98.9%	98.2%	97.1%	99.0%	98.7%	98.9%	98.4%	98.5%	97.5%	96.6%	97.7%	96.6%
Customers surveyed expressing dissatisfaction with the relay service	<5% customers dissatisfied	The bi-annual Customer Satisfaction Survey was carried out in September 2018, with results available at https://www.ngts.org.uk/news.html											
Standard relay calls abandoned[7]	<3% Standard Calls Abandoned	1.3%	1.0%	2.4%	1.2%	1.7%	2.2%	1.0%	2.2%	2.7%	3.8%	3.3%	2.7%
Emergency calls abandoned. This is in line with the standard voice service measure	<2% Emergency Calls Abandoned	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.3%
Relay assistants to be monitored at least quarterly for speed of transcription, accuracy and process conformance	94% of calls handled correctly	97.7%	99.4%	99.9%	99.3%	97.3%	99.5%	98.5%	100%	97.7%	99.9%	99.1%	100%

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[6] This KPI demonstrates consistency of performance across each 24 hour period and limits the opportunity of long periods of poor performance being masked with one period of really good performance

[7] "Abandoned" means that the call is ended by the caller before the relay assistant is brought in

Measure	Target	Actual Achieved											
		Oct-17	**Nov-17**	**Dec-17**	**Jan-18**	**Feb-18**	**Mar-18**	**Apr-18**	**May-18**	**Jun-18**	**Jul-18**	**Aug-18**	**Sep-18**
In conversation voice to text transcription speed for standard/emergency relay calls, per call[8]	>40 words per minute (wpm) (when the user is able to receive 40wpm or faster)	99.8%	99.8%	99.7%	99.8%	99.7%	99.8%	99.8%	99.5%	99.6%	99.8%	99.6%	99.8%
In conversation voice to text transcription speed for standard/emergency relay calls	Average of at least 60 wpm averaged across calls	72.3	72.9	72.9	71.9	71.8	72.9	72.2	72.9	71.4	74.5	68.4	73.0
Average voice to text transcription accuracy	Better than 98%	96.7%	96.7%	99.6%	98.9%	97.2%	97.8%	96.0%	98.5%	99.0%	100%	99.2%	100%
Complaints relating to the relay service	Less than one complaint per 1000 calls	0.29	0.12	0.19	0.08	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.16	0.04	0.09	0.12
Total calls to be subject to a relay assistant handover	No more than 2% of total calls	0.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.3%	0.7%	2.2%	0.9%

All measures except for ">40 wpm" are averaged over a monthly period

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[8] Figures based on relay assistant sessions where the average WPM is 41WPM or better, data not logged currently for individual calls

[i] General Condition 15.3 The Communications Provider shall ensure that such of its Subscribers who, because of their disabilities, need to make or receive calls in which some or all of the call is made or received in text format, are able to access and use a Relay Service, including the receiving of calls made by End-Users irrespective of whether such End-Users have a disability. Such Subscribers and End-Users, as the case may be, shall be charged for the conveyance of messages to which a Relay Service applies at no more than the equivalent price as if that conveyance had been made directly between the caller and the called person without use of a Relay Service. In making such charges, the Communications Provider shall apply a special tariff scheme designed to compensate Subscribers who, because of their disabilities, need to make calls to which a Relay Service applies for the additional time to make telephone calls using a Relay Service.

[ii] General Condition 15.5 By no later than 18 April 2014 a Relay Service provided by the Communications Provider to its Subscribers pursuant to paragraph 15.3 must:
(a) provide facilities for the receipt and translation of voice communications into text and the conveyance of that text to the terminal of End-Users of any provider of Publicly Available Telephone Services and vice versa,
(b) provide facilities for the receipt and transmission of voice communications in parallel with text communications, allowing both channels to work in tandem to deliver near synchronous voice and text;
(c) provide facilities for access to Emergency Organisations;
(d) subject to Conditions 3 and 13.1, be available for lawful use by End-Users at all times;
(e) be capable of being accessed by End-Users of the service from readily available compatible terminal equipment, including textphones, Braille readers, personal computers and mobile telephones;
(f) not prevent End-Users from communicating with other End-users of other approved Relay Services;
(g) provide facilities to allow End-Users, who because of their disabilities need to make calls using a Relay Service, to receive incoming calls via the Relay Service, without the calling party needing to dial a prefix;
(h) insofar as reasonably practicable, allow for communication between End-Users of the service at speeds equivalent to voice communications;
(i) take measures to ensure the confidentiality of communications between End-Users of the service;
(j) comply with any directions in respect of the service which Ofcom may make from time to time; and
(k) be approved by Ofcom for the purposes of this Condition 15.5.