



sequel

deaf telecoms update



issue 8 / spring 2003

New deaf-friendly emergency roadside telephones

The first new Emergency Roadside Telephones (ERT) suitable for use by profoundly deaf and hard-of-hearing people have been installed on parts of the M11, M25 and A12. By 2005, all ERTs in England should be accessible to deaf people.



Manufactured by Jasmin Simtec Ltd for the Highways Agency, the new ERTs have had extensive trials involving TAG, Hearing Concern and a variety of deaf and hard-of-hearing users. The new phones should be easy to spot – they are just over two metres high and have a very visible fluorescent orange sign with black SOS and location numbering.

There are clear instructions for use inside the door. Users start a call for assistance in the usual way by lifting the handset. An LCD display gives prompts which show call progress and when an operator is on line.

For hard-of-hearing users, the phone has an inductive coil and an adjustable volume control. The ERT also has a high powered ringing tone and a flashing beacon in case the operator has to call back.

For profoundly deaf users, there is a text facility which uses the LCD display and two push-buttons to answer “yes” or “no” to questions from a standard list. When deaf users lift the handset, they should say “deaf” to start up the text system – but even if they say nothing, a default option will soon start and written questions appear on the screen. Firstly, the user is asked what language they prefer to use (the current options are English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Welsh) and then a series of questions in priority order – do you want ambulance, fire brigade and police, or a breakdown service and so on. The operator sees the response to each question immediately it is answered.

The new ERT is a major advance in helping deaf and hard-of-hearing motorists to communicate effectively in an emergency. Use it if you need it!



TAG's newsletter for advisers of deaf people and others interested in deaf telecoms.

Inside this issue:

seeing you in Leicester

NDCS Listening Bus textphone software for PCs

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DECT phones & hearing aids

Seeing you in Leicester

We are looking for a **new name for Sequel**. Send your suggestions to tagenquiries@hotmail.com and you could win a grand prize!

Text-to-text callers should now use the **180015** prefix to get lower cost calls – see page 3

Michael Day, well known to TAG reps, has been appointed to the new post of BT TextDirect Product Manager.

TAG thanks BT for its sponsorship of Sequel

Leicester has one of the country's densest concentrations of videophones used by deaf people. It all started in 2002 with a two-year trial project linking the deaf community to local hospitals and GPs, but what has been happening since then?

With funding from the local health authority, videophones were initially located in one community and three acute hospitals, including an accident and



emergency unit, four GP surgeries, the homes of four qualified interpreters and the Leicester Centre for Deaf People.

Soon afterwards, Philip Kilgour, Director of the Deaf Centre, saw an offer from BT giving away a limited number of videophones with the BT Home Highway telephone service.

“When I contacted BT there were only 30 videophones left under the offer and I quickly told the deaf community about the offer,” said Philip Kilgour. “I was a bit disappointed when only four deaf people were prepared to pay for the Home Highway lines – but the rental was significantly more than a normal phone line and price was clearly a major barrier.”

Today a small group of Leicester deaf people are using videophones to contact each other socially while the whole deaf community can access an interpreter by videophone at one of the four hospitals or four GP surgeries.

“Uptake of the interpreting services in the health venues has not been as high as I had initially hoped,” said Philip Kilgour. “I think there are two main reasons for this. Firstly we need to convince the medics to be more proactive in asking for the video interpreting service – after all they need it just as much as the deaf people. Secondly, there is a bit of cultural resistance to videophones all round. If videophones were more widely available, I’m convinced that the technology would really take off for deaf people.”

Philip Kilgour believes that the current generation of videophones are great for sign language – they just need a slightly slower speed of signing – and even thinks that they can be used for lip-reading to a certain extent though there is a bit of an issue because picture and sound aren’t always in sync. And he has spotted one particular problem – “at home I have to be careful what I wear when I walk behind my wife when she is using the videophone – once I was caught just coming out of the shower!”

A plea from TAG chair

PLEASE, when you send emails, use standard sans serif fonts (like this one – Arial) and use a sensible font size to make sure your email can be easily read! Coloured text and fancy fonts can be very difficult to decipher.

You know what I mean?

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

You know what I mean?

You know what I mean?

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You know what I mean?

You know what I mean?

Yes, I think you know what I mean! Believe it or not, I’ve received emails like these – and worse!

Ruth Myers

The NDCS Listening Bus®

Well over once around the globe or almost 100 trips from Lands End to John O’Groats (70,000 miles!) – that’s how far the NDCS Listening Bus® has travelled to show working examples of the latest specialist aids and equipment for deaf children and families. Forty thousand people - equivalent to the population of Canterbury – have boarded the bus to see its unique mobile technology exhibition on its visits to schools and events around the UK.



Sponsored by HSBC, the Bus is packed with working examples of the latest specialist aids and equipment for deaf children and families to try, including textphones, mobile phones, video phones, alarm clocks, smoke detectors, pagers, loop systems, subtitled films and educational software.

And the most popular technology on board? Videophones! Even though they are probably still too expensive for most people to buy for themselves, they are enormously popular as they are ideal for sign language users – even non-signers enjoy sharing a smile, a wave or a funny face! Who knows – it might not be too long before videophone prices plummet.

If you have an event coming up that you think might benefit from a visit by the Listening Bus®, contact

➤ Heather Fletcher or Theresa Grennan on 020 7490 8656 (voice & text) or email roadshow@ndcs.org.uk.

Text-to-text calls just got simpler

Textphone-to-textphone callers can now use BT TextDirect without fear of being interrupted by the operator.

All text-to-text callers need to do is dial the prefix 180015 followed by the number of the person they want to call (including their area code). The prefix and the telephone number can be dialled together without pausing, or callers can dial the prefix and wait for a prompt to dial the actual number.

The new system will be especially useful to those using Voice Carry Over between two textphones. However, some calls that worked with the 18001 prefix will not

work using 180015 eg calls via a switchboard unused to text calls or to a voice answering machine.

TAG has been campaigning for a better text-to-text facility with TextDirect. Until now, the TextDirect technology could not always recognise text-to-text calls and would sometimes bring in the operator – although operators never stayed online once they realised it was a text-to-text call.

Callers wanting the RNID Typetalk service should continue to use the existing prefixes – 18001 for deaf users and 18002 for hearing people.

NDCS has just upgraded its [website](http://www.ndcs.org.uk). Its 800 pages have comprehensive information on NDCS services, how to find your local NDCS and nearly all its publications will be available online

www.ndcs.org.uk

[Sense](#) is taking part in the first-ever [European lifestyle survey of people with Usher Syndrome](#). Part of the survey is about telecoms. A summary of the results will appear in [Sequel](#).



Textphone software for PCs

New software enabling PC users to communicate with textphones and to have text conversations with each other was launched in April.

Priced at only £4.99, the Chattertext™ software will work with Windows on a PC and

communicate with textphones that are V18 compliant (most modern models). The software sits “in background” on the PC and when someone calls, the Chattertext screen pops up.

The screen is split top and bottom and you can even prepare text offline in the lower half.

“I heard about the problems deaf people faced from two deaf people at a business breakfast in my area,” said Ken Gorf,



Managing Director of Mowis Ltd based in Worcestershire. “Our first thought was to put the software into our range of PDAs. We did that and then thought – why not make the software available for PC users. And that’s what we’ve done.

“Mowis usually makes IT solutions for business, but Chattertext should help deaf people, their friends, relatives – and businesses. I hope it will encourage more businesses to communicate with deaf people.”

▶ You can download Chattertext from www.chattertext.net.

Ten thousand Chattertext CDs are also being sent to deaf clubs, deaf schools and colleges etc. After a brief trial period, users can register as users.

TAG's Award for All grant gets to work

An Interactive Services and Digital TV seminar with a deaf perspective is being organised by TAG in London on Tuesday 10th June 2003 from 10am to 5pm.

Speakers will include a representative from Ofcom (the new Office of Communications which replaces the present broadcasting and telecommunications regulators) and will be introduced by Lord Ashley of Stoke CH.

The seminar is sponsored through a Community Fund Awards for All grant along with contributions from the BBC, ITC and Sky.

▶ contact Ruth Myers
email rmyers@waitrose.com
fax 01923 283127

Later this year the remainder of the Awards for All grant will be used for a seminar on text telecommunications – see the next edition of Sequel for more information.

Cordless phones – a familiar story?

Cordless telephones bring many benefits, writes Jack Sandover of *Hearing Concern*, but like mobile phones some are posing difficulties for many hearing aid wearers. Analogue cordless phones work well, but the digital (DECT) cordless phones often give interference problems and no adaptive devices yet exist to alleviate the problem.

If your hearing aids cope with a mobile, don't assume that they will work well with DECT. Some DECT phones have a small 'loudspeaker' which might enable you to hear the phone held a few inches from the ear – outside the interference range. However, hearing people around you will be able to listen in to the conversation!

For now, analogue cordless phone seem the surest answer. Geemarc ClearSound 15 & 30 and the BT Quartet range seem to give good results – they have inductive couplers and quite a good volume.

As usual, “try before you buy”, but I have yet to find an easy way to do this!

TAG website

www.telecomsactiongroup.org.uk

Events

TAG Interactive Services & Digital TV seminar

10 June 2003 – see p 4

NDCS Technology Exhibition at Telford

20 & 21 June 2003

(20th is Professionals' Day, 21st is Family Fun Day)

▶ Felicity Martin, NDCS on 0121 234 9820 (voice & text) or email felcity@ndcs.org.uk

CAMTAD Hear This Exhibition

11-16 August 2003

celebrating CAMTAD's 25th anniversary at St Andrew The Great, St Andrews Street, Cambridge

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