



Relay UK– what is it and how to ensure that deaf, hard of hearing people or people who have communication impairments have a good experience when contacting you with it?

What is Relay UK?

Relay UK is a service which is provided free of charge for people who are unable to hear clearly on the telephone or have a speech impairment. It was previously known as Next Generation Text and is run by BT. The person who is unable to use the telephone or finds it tricky can download a free app on their computer, tablet or mobile or use a textphone if they already have one. They then call your number using a prefix (18001) which connects them to a Relay Assistant. There are 3 options on what may happen next depending on what options the person has chosen.

- A person with a speech impairment may be able to hear you but type what they want to say, and the assistant will speak this to you.
- A person who is deaf may speak themselves and the assistant will type what you say for them.
- A person who is deaf may choose to type and read; the assistant will relay both sides of the conversation.

Can we contact a customer using Text Relay?

Yes, you can use the prefix 18002 and then type their telephone number, but many Relay UK or textphone users have a textphone number.

These start with 03306 or 07777. It's important that you ask them how they would prefer you to contact them and record this accurately on your system.

What about Data Protection and GDPR?

Relay UK is a regulated service, and as such must follow strict guidelines. Text Conversations are encrypted and then erased straight after the call has ended. The service is covered by the BT Privacy policy and is fully GDPR compliant. The ICO has clearly stated that users of Typetalk (now Relay UK) or other similar services have effectively consented to giving their information. Usual security procedures should apply, for example asking adequate security questions to authenticate that the customer is who they say they are before discussing any account details. It's important to note the Equality Commission advises that refusing to take calls from disabled people that involve a third party, is likely to be a breach of the Equality Act. So, in a nutshell, you should take calls made through Relay UK in the same way you would if the person was able to contact you directly themselves.

How can we improve the experience of Relay UK users when contacting us?

Simplify your call menus or add an option for people using Relay UK

Because the Relay Assistant must type each menu option and wait for the individual using the service to respond it can be very difficult to navigate call menus and often results in several repeat calls which is incredibly frustrating for all involved. Try to simplify your menus as much as possible so there isn't a need for several menu options and allow plenty of time between the last menu option and the call dropping out. Ideally a menu option for people using Relay UK should be available so they can bypass the call menu or at least minimise it.

Train your staff

Make sure staff know the following:

- They can accept calls using Relay UK and should initiate usual security procedures.
- Treat the call like they would any other and speak directly to the caller and not the assistant, avoiding saying things like “can you tell them”.
- Be patient – calls can take a little extra time.
- If they need to contact a relay user back, ask them the best way to do this.