



Virgin Media For All



At Virgin Media we think it's important that everyone should be able to enjoy our wide range of services. That includes meeting the needs of disabled customers, wherever we can.

We offer a number of different services for those with special needs, and these are designed not only to satisfy current regulations (such as the Disability Discrimination Act*), but also to allow us to offer the best possible service to disabled customers. More details are available in our Customer Code of Practice (see below).

Virgin Media was born out of the merger of the two large cable companies, ntl and Telewest, back in 2007. Since then a considerable amount of resource and investment has gone into consolidating the many different technologies and processes used by the legacy cable companies. This work is complex and will continue over the next few years as we strive to improve our products and delight our customers.

Read on and you'll find:

1. An overview of the services we offer our disabled customers
 - Subtitling
 - Audio Description
 - Signing
2. An update on the work we have been doing to introduce subtitles onto our TV on Demand service.
3. How we're hoping to improve the accessibility of our TV Guide (sometimes called our Electronic Programme Guide or EPG)

*Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (as amended)



1. Working to improve accessibility

Virgin Media can provide customers with bills, and some of our key literature such as our Customer Code of Practice, in Braille, large-print or audio-format.

We have invested in the technology needed to ensure that access services, such as subtitling and audio-description, are readily available across as many channels as possible on our digital TV service. We now carry many thousands of hours of subtitled and audio-described programmes each year.

In 2009 our own group of Virgin Media TV channels (including Virgin1, LIVING, LIVING2, [now LIVINGit] Bravo, Bravo2, Challenge) will exceed Ofcom's targets, carrying just over 23,000 hours of content with access services. We also aimed to ensure that the first transmission of high-profile series – such as Private Practice, America's Next Top Model, The Unit, Army Wives, Grey's Anatomy and Boston Legal – were shown with subtitles.

Alongside other broadcasters and representatives from the deaf community, we were active in helping to establish the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust, which provides sign-presented programming for the deaf. We have been delighted to see the Trust develop throughout the year.

Details of other services available to our disabled customers are available in our Customer Code of Practice: http://allyours.virginmedia.com/pdf/code_of_practice_pdf

2. Subtitling on Virgin Media

All channels with an audience above a certain threshold are obliged to deliver subtitles alongside their programming, in line with rules laid down by Ofcom. The volume of subtitling available varies widely across channels but many channels go beyond the minimum requirements. Whenever subtitles are made available by a broadcaster, you'll be able to see them through Virgin Media's digital TV service.



2.1 Easier access to subtitles

We've made it even easier to get subtitles on Virgin TV. You can now switch them on and off easily while watching a programme.

To turn subtitles on while watching TV, you simply press 'Guide' to bring up the mini guide then press the blue key on the remote control. This turns on subtitles for all channels.



If you'd like to switch subtitles off, just press the 'Guide' button on your remote control again to display the mini guide. Then press the blue key on the remote control to hide the subtitles. This will turn subtitles off on all programmes.

You can also turn subtitles on and off in the same way from the Favourites Guide. Just follow the steps below.



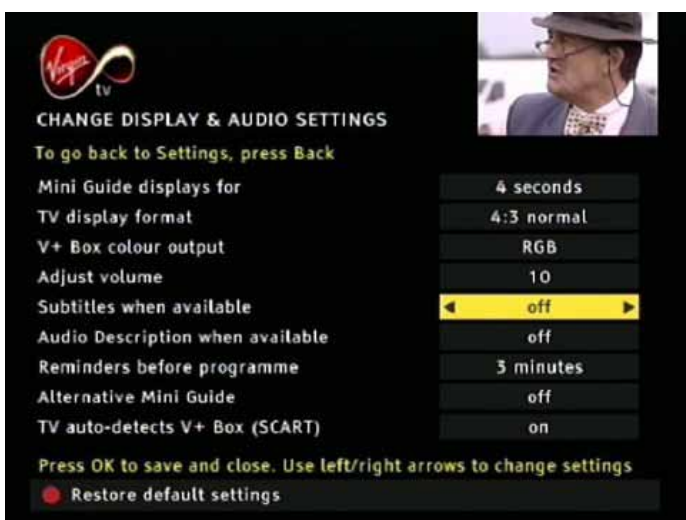
Just press the 'Favourites' button on the remote control and you'll see what's coming up next on your favourite channels. Then press the blue button to switch Subtitles on.

Subtitles can also be turned on and off by opening the SETTINGS menu. Here's how:



1. Press the 'Home' button on the remote control and select 'Settings' (option 8)

2. From the 'Settings' menu, select 'Change display & audio settings' (Option 4)



3. The 'Subtitles When Available' option can be toggled between ON and OFF

4. Press OK to confirm the new settings and return to the previous menu

3. Audio Description on Virgin Media

Every channel that provides a pre-mixed audio-description narrative as part of a programme, can now be relayed to our customers.

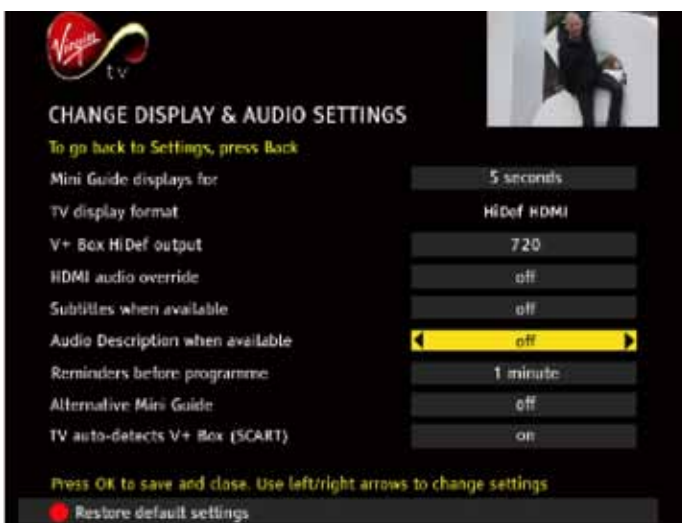
If you'd like to use Audio Description, here's how. Press the 'Home' button and go to the SETTINGS menu, where you can switch it on and off.



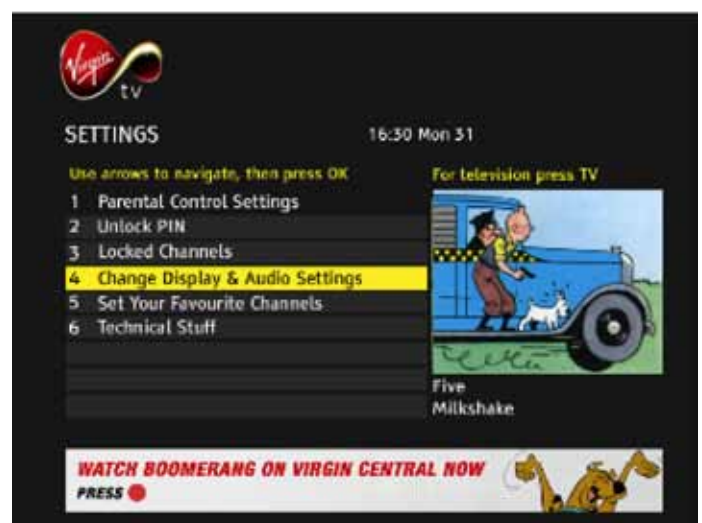
1. user presses the HOME button on the remotecontrol and selects SETTINGS (Option 8)



2. From the SETTINGS menu, the user selects CHANGE DISPLAY & AUDIO SETTINGS (Option 4)



3. The 'Audio Description When Available' option can be toggled between OFF and ON.



4. The user presses OK to confirm the new settings and return to the previous menu



You can get Audio Description on any channel that makes it available, except BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel 4, and Five.

That's because Virgin Media sources these channels via a DTT feed which does not carry a pre-mixed audio description component.

But if you'd like to get an audio description service on these channels, you can simply flick to the channel numbers below.

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Channel position</i>
BBC1	851
BBC2	852
ITV1	853
Channel 4	854
Five	855

If you want to watch these channels without Audio Description then you simply need to tune into the standard channel, such as BBC1 on channel 101.

4. Signing on Virgin Media

In-vision signing is supported across all of Virgin Media's digital TV service. The responsibility for providing this material lies entirely with broadcasters and sign-interpreted programming is simply relayed to our customers.

Sign-interpreted programming continued to appear on the large terrestrial channels throughout 2009 but largely disappeared from many digital channels. This is because, at the start of 2009, many multi-channel broadcasters – including the Virgin Media TV channels – became part of the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (“BSLBT”).

The BSLBT was set-up by multi-channel broadcasters together with representatives from the deaf community to increase the amount of dedicated “sign-presented” programming on television. The Trust's programmes are funded by broadcasters and go out on The Community Channel. More details of its output can be found at <http://www.bslbt.co.uk/>



5. On Demand Programming

Virgin Media's TV On Demand service allows customers to access over 4,000 TV shows (including BBC iPlayer, ITV Net Player and 4oD), over 500 films and over 3,000 music videos.

We are very much aware that the current lack of subtitling across our On Demand service is a source of frustration for customers who rely on subtitles to watch television.

We have been working to introduce subtitling for On Demand content. Since our last update:

- we have prepared Virgin Media's On Demand infrastructure to ensure support for digital subtitling throughout the network and for every variant of set-top box
- we have also worked closely with the BBC throughout 2009 to integrate and test the delivery of subtitled BBC iPlayer content

As a result, we are expecting subtitled BBC iPlayer content to become available to Virgin Media TV customers in 2010.

The wide range of content available on the Virgin Media On Demand services comes from a number of producers, both in the UK and abroad. In this context it is important to recognise that there are currently substantial operational overheads associated with preparing correctly timed and formatted subtitles for On Demand programming. The reason for this is that there are many different subtitle file formats, and the majority of subtitled programmes currently need manual file manipulation before they can be loaded onto our On Demand service. As a result, in 2010 we will continue to examine potential solutions that improve the cost-economics of making a broader range of subtitled programmes available on-demand.

6. Improved Signposting of Access Services

In our previous statement, we emphasised our commitment to improving the signposting of subtitled, audio-described and signed programming within the Electronic Programme Guide.

We described our investment in a replacement 'Service Information' platform. This new Service Information platform provides the foundations on which future Electronic Programme Guide enhancements can be built - including those that relate to access services.

Development of this platform has been ongoing throughout 2009, in conjunction with a replacement smartcard security platform which will help prevent fraud. We'll be bringing these to our customers during the first half of 2010.

Once in place, we will be able to develop the Electronic Programme Guide to take advantage of the improved Service Information platform's capabilities.

Here's what we're hoping to develop:

- A set of clear and accurate on-screen indicators which let you know which programmes are subtitled, audio described or signed
- An audio signal which you hear when you flick to a programme that's Audio-Described.
- A feature which highlights subtitled, audio described or signed programmes in a different colour within the main Electronic Programme Guide.

