



The National Council on Ageing

Core Receiver Requirements

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Age Concern England (the National Council on Ageing) brings together Age Concern organisations working at a local level and 100 national bodies, including charities, professional bodies and representational groups with an interest in older people and ageing issues. Through our national information line, which receives 225,000 telephone and postal enquiries a year, and the information services offered by local Age Concern organisations, we are in day to day contact with older people.
- 1.2 Age Concern has been a member of three successive groups set up by Government to advise them on consumer issues relating to analogue switch-off. We are currently a member of the Consumer Expert Group (CEG) which has the remit to advise on the effectiveness of Government communications on its digital switchover policy and their communications regarding a targeted assistance scheme.
- 1.3 The plan to switchover from analogue to digital is complex and involves a number of considerations and choices, all of which are important. However our main concerns throughout our involvement on the consumer advisory groups have related to affordability and usability and installation of equipment. We are therefore pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the current draft core receiver requirements for the targeted assistance scheme for older and disabled people.
- 1.4 We are extremely pleased that this document includes the recommendations from the CEG report 'Digital TV Equipment: Vulnerable Consumer Requirements' published earlier this year. There has been considerable research into the importance of the usability of digital equipment with accompanying design recommendations for equipment suppliers that has been commissioned over several years by the Government and Ofcom. We think the industry has had sufficient notice of the importance the Government places on usability as well as the necessary guidance from this research to enable them to produce more usable

equipment in time to meet the start of the targeted help scheme which will not start until about six months before Whitehaven is switched over in the autumn of 2007.

- 1.5 Age Concern has promoted the concept of inclusive design for many years. We remain disappointed that, despite the large increase in numbers of older people expected in the future UK population, product designers in most industries continue to ignore inclusive design principles. Given that an ageing population will also be occurring in European and international markets it seems UK product and service providers, especially those who are global market players, are failing to reap the benefits they could accrue if they took more account of the needs of older people when designing their products.
- 1.6 We think that public procurement is a powerful incentive to transform markets by encouraging inclusive design which we consider makes products easier to use by consumers of all ages, not just those who are older or disabled. We therefore strongly support the Government's decision to procure the most usable equipment for the targeted help scheme rather than, as industry would have preferred, have a voucher scheme since we do not think the latter would encourage the availability of more usable equipment in the market place.

Policy Unit, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER.
Registered charity no. 261794

GJ/April 2006