

Media Release

Improving access to mobiles for disabled and elderly users

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A global information service to help people with disabilities or functional limitations identify suitable mobile phones was launched in the United Kingdom today.

In response to requests from disability groups for improved information regarding accessibility features, the mobile phone industry has developed a global information tool for reporting, searching and comparing the accessibility features of mobile phones.

The Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI), includes a website – www.mobileaccessibility.info – which allows consumers to search for a mobile phone model that suits their specific accessibility needs.

Michael Milligan, Secretary General of the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) said, “Accessibility is not just about disability. Sooner or later, we will all experience accessibility issues – from poorer eyesight, hearing impairment or declining dexterity. For some, their needs are even greater, and GARI helps identify those features that make a difference and give consumers more choices when looking for a mobile phone to meet their specific needs.”

Mr. Milligan continued, “For example, people with limited vision may want adjustable text size or larger screens, while for the blind, a phone that offers text-to-speech may be more suitable. For the hearing impaired, models with more visual alerts and indicators or easy messaging options could be more useful, while for those with arthritis in the hands, ‘candy bar’ phones may be easier to use, avoiding the need for actions they may find difficult, such as sliding open the phone to use it.”

Claudio Pollack, Head of the Consumer Group at Ofcom added, “We very much welcome the launch of GARI in the UK. This information on the website is highly practical - for example, hard of hearing people can find out if a particular handset is compatible with hearing aids, and visually impaired people can find out if a handset’s manual is available electronically. This is objective information that enables consumers to make an informed choice. We hope that many disabled and elderly people will use and benefit from the GARI website in years to come.”

Hamish MacLeod, Chair of the Mobile Broadband Group (MBG) also added “Mobile devices offer a wide range of features that make it easier for customers with disabilities to enjoy the benefits of mobile communications. The Mobile Broadband Group strongly supports this initiative by the MMF to make the relevant information more easily accessible for those who need it most.”

“We believe that the GARI project will improve awareness and knowledge of the accessibility options that are available on mobile phones for consumers in the UK. We welcome further feedback and ideas from disability groups to improve the project as it is implemented globally,” Mr Milligan concluded.

The website is available at: www.mobileaccessibility.info

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Note for Editors:

The Mobile Manufacturers Forum is an international association of telecommunications equipment manufacturers with an interest in mobile or wireless communications.

The Mobile Broadband Group, whose members include network operators in the UK, works with consumers, Government, and Regulators to bring about an optimal regulatory environment across a range of issues.