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| **RogerVoice**  **The App which Delivers Phone Calls to Deaf People** | Surrey Coalition Logo |

This article was originally written in 2016 by Robin Christopherson, Head of Digital Inclusion at AbilityNet. I have made some changes to the text to bring it up-to-date. But, in the main, thanks goes to Robin for supplying the information on this excellent app!

Most people take phone calls for granted. However, for people who are deaf or have hearing loss, the ability to simply pick up the phone and chat is often out of reach. The good news is that RogerVoice, an app which uses real-time speech translation, makes this a thing of the past.

The everyday ability to call a friend, the bank or doctor’s surgery is something that people with normal hearing take for granted. However, for people with a severe hearing impairment, making phone calls can be very problematic, if not impossible, as they can’t hear the person on the other end of the line. Being deaf from birth can sometimes also lead to difficulties in developing clear speech – making it hard for the other person to understand what’s being said.

Existing services such as NGTS (Next Generation Text Service) have been incredibly useful in helping deaf people make and receive calls. They work by providing an intermediary – a person listens to the caller and relays the information by text to the deaf user. The user then speaks or types back and the intermediary speaks the message back to the caller. The deaf user is either using a special textphone (called a Minicom) or an app on their smartphone, tablet or computer.

This approach is very effective. The one drawback, however, is the inevitable delay as the intermediary relays the messages back and forth throughout the conversation. Conversations take much longer and feel a bit cumbersome and stilted.

With the Next Generation Text Service, The person being called is always aware that a text relay intermediary is involved and that this isn’t a ‘standard’ phone conversation. This isn’t a problem in itself but wouldn’t it be great if it felt a little more like a normal chat?

## RogerVoice to the rescue

RogerVoice is an app that makes calls feel more natural and avoids those awkward delays. With a powerful speech recognition system the app transforms phone calls into a series of live instant messages for the deaf user. It's automatic and it works in real time. The text translation appears in the app at the same time as the person is speaking. RogerVoice is helping people with a hearing impairment make phone calls to anyone, anywhere – the person being called doesn’t need to have the app installed and they don’t even need to be using a smartphone themselves.

Most deaf people can speak very clearly and understandably. However, if they don’t have clear speech they can choose to type instead. As there is no intermediary involved in the process with RogerVoice, the text is spoken to the person on the other end of the line using realistic synthetic speech. This can often sound clearer to the listener than messages relayed by someone in a busy call centre environment. The app also has some stock phrases provided for quick responses.

## How do I get RogerVoice?

RogerVoice is available as a free download from the App Store on Apple iOS devices and from the Play Store on Android devices.

## How much does RogerVoice cost?

The app itself is free. When you first install the app, you are granted 30 minutes of free calls. Thereafter, you need to subscribe to one of the available plans. The price plans are below:

## £5.49 per Month

For this, you get 1 hour of calls to landlines and mobiles. You also get 1 hour of calls to other RogerVoice users. Incoming calls are free.

## £27.49 per month

For this, you get Unlimited calls to landlines and mobiles. You also get unlimited calls to other RogerVoice users. Additionally, you can make up to 2 hours' worth of International calls. Incoming calls are free!

You can cancel your subscription at any time. You can then subscribe again whenever you like. The ability to do this is really useful, as you can dip in and out of the service when you need it!

To find out more about RogerVoice, visit their web site at the following web address:

<https://rogervoice.com>