



[Phone that boosts clarity for the deaf | The Times](#)

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In a trial of the software which boosts frequencies the user struggles to hear, one user said he could hear better on the phone than face to face

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Using a phone is about to become much easier for millions of people with hearing loss after the successful test of a technology that boosts the clarity of calls to their numbers.

The software boosts the specific frequencies that the user struggles to hear. In a four-week trial on the Isle of Man, one user said that he could hear his son better on the phone than face to face.

In the test, funded by the Wellcome Trust, 92 per cent of participants said they experienced improved call clarity with the Goshawk Speech Platform.

More than ten million people in the UK have some form of hearing loss, nearly one in six of the population. The World Health Organisation has predicted that by 2020 adult hearing loss will be one of the top ten disease burdens facing society.

Sally Shaw, director of Ideas for Ears, a not-for-profit social enterprise that helps people with hearing

difficulties, said that the software had “real potential to make a difference”.

She said: “Improved clarity is important because many people have lost confidence in their ability to pick up the phone and hear — and particularly with work use, that is very difficult.”

The technology works by asking users to sit an online hearing test to identify the frequencies they cannot hear well — some will struggle with higher frequencies, others with lower ones. The telephone network then picks up that a call is being made to or from their number, whether mobile or landline, and runs it through additional software to enhance the frequencies the user struggles with.

The trial on the Manx Telecom network involved 33 people, 30 of whom had varying degrees of hearing loss, and three who did not, between 27 and 81 years old.

John Boyes, now 82, said: “The Goshawk Speech Platform was brilliant. I could use my left ear, which I sustained an industrial injury to some years ago, and I could hold the phone to my ear without using my hearing aid. I haven’t been able to hear a phone in that ear for what seems like centuries.”

Catherine Hayhow, 54, who has hearing loss in both ears, said: “I had previously relied almost exclusively on text as a means of communication with my phone and [this] allowed me to actually have a conversation.”

The platform caused some technical issues, such as echoing and delay in sound, which engineers hope to combat before a wider trial.

Matthew Turner, chief executive of Goshawk Communications and the technology's creator, said that his own deafness from birth and frustration using the telephone had led to the idea. The company hopes to begin trials with a main telecoms network in June.