

Annex 4, Part B
Interventions overview

Interventions can be categorised in different ways:

- Those that require transmission staff to amend/adjust a schedule or playlist in advance of it being transmitted; and
- Those that are a response to an issue/incident during transmission, whether anticipated or not.

Below is a description of a number of different scenarios that may need intervention by transmission staff: late programme changes, late delivery/duration mismatch, live programming, regional programming and schedule error.

Whether the intervention requires amendments/adjustments to be made in advance of transmission or responses to issues during transmission, there are certain processes which are commonly used. These feature in the description of the interventions themselves (e.g. related to switching feeds/manual pushing of buttons) with longer descriptions of three particular processes (schedule change, service continuity and use of contingency/Standby schedules) described more fully further below.

INTERVENTION SCENARIOS

Late programme change

Broadcasters may decide to change the scheduled programme (once the schedule and playlist have been delivered to the playout provider) for a variety of reasons including;

- Legal issues concerning the scheduled programme
- The programme's purpose was to provide coverage/highlights of an event that didn't happen as planned (e.g. cricket highlights not being shown because the weather disrupted play all day)
- A news event makes it inappropriate to transmit the programme because it covers similar themes or is out of date
- A news event occurs that warrants programming being changed to provide additional news programming
- A newsflash

In the case of the first two examples, the broadcaster may have advanced notice that there is a likelihood that the programmes will have to be changed. In these cases, the broadcaster will already have alerted the playout provider that a programme change is possible and indicate in advance what the change would be. Wherever possible, the broadcaster will select an alternative programme that will fit as closely as possible in terms of duration (and number of breaks if relevant).

Changing the playlist

Regardless of the reason for the change, a decision to change the programme schedule will be taken by the broadcaster.

Once the instruction from the broadcaster is given, the transmission staff at the playout provider would simply delete the original programme's details from the automation playlist and input the replacement programme's details as provided by the broadcaster. Additional details would normally be available on the transmission servers/automation database.

The programme may not exactly match the duration of the previous programme (including any sponsorship bumpers which would also be deleted) so, if necessary, the playout provider may need to adjust the other timings in the schedule. This may involve removing promotions, choosing one of a different length, or changing the duration of station idents before the next programme. These shorter events are known as interstitials. Decision making on these interstitials will depend on the instructions from the relevant broadcaster (some will allow the playout provider to conduct these independently, others will need to be referred to the broadcaster).

Some broadcasters may also ask the playout provider to contact the provider of the broadcaster's Electronic programme guide (EPG) to notify them of a change in order that viewers get the correct description for the programme that is to be shown on their digital platform TV listings.

If the replacement programming is a News programme, the deletion process is the same but rather than extracting programme details from the automation database, the playout provider will instead enter the incoming internal lines that the news programme will appear on as the programme would not be on a server. The process is otherwise the same as with other programming save that the playout provider may also need to liaise with the News studio to confirm the start and duration of the programme, and the timing of any commercial breaks. As News is a live programme, some of the events within it (commercials) and at the end will need to be manually triggered by transmission staff rather than run by the automation at a set time (see further below).

If a Newsflash is to be added to the schedule, it would normally be at the request of the broadcaster who would advise the transmission staff where it should be scheduled and how the subsequent schedule should be adjusted. This usually involves the Newsflash as a new event in the playlist and its source being inputted into the automation playlist.

Any graphic elements over the end credits of the original programming may also need to be changed or removed by the transmission staff as directed by the broadcaster. This may require editing of the automation playlist as well as typing in text changes into a graphics device.

Late programme changes are a feature of many channels.

Late delivered programme/duration mismatch

If a broadcaster expects a programme to be delivered to a playout provider after the schedule/playlist has been sent to them then they will give an indicative duration in the

schedule. If on a commercial channel, this would also show expected times for each programme part.

When the programme actually arrives, the playout provider's transmission team will check the actual times and enter those either directly into the automation system or they will be pulled into the playlist when the programme is loaded onto the playout server.

This may result in over-runs or under-runs from the expected duration. Depending on the scale of these, transmission staff may need to make changes to promotions and idents as described earlier. The start times of other programmes might also need to be changed in which case a greater number of events will need to have their start time changed throughout the schedule.

Depending on the nature of the change and whether there are any fixed points in the schedule that the broadcaster wishes to maintain, it is possible for the automation system to ripple and recalculate a schedule. On commercial channels, the transmission staff will also need to ensure that any changes do not result in the regulations around commercial minutage per hour being breached.

Generally minor changes (i.e. a couple of seconds) are unlikely to require referral to the broadcaster. Larger ones may require broadcaster guidance.

The above process is the same for a duration mismatch when the timings and duration that the broadcaster has used for the schedule turn out to be slightly different to the timings that the playout provider has when they do their checks on the delivered content.

Late delivered programme/duration mismatches are a feature of many channels, particularly where commercials are involved.

Live events

Whilst live events require more intervention than pre-recorded ones, this is very much a "business as usual" process used by most broadcasters who regularly carry any live programming.

The playout provider is advised in advance by the broadcaster or the broadcaster's nominated Production Company for the live programming, and details of where a live programme will be coming from and how it will be delivered to the playout provider.

Once the schedule/playlist has been delivered, the transmission team will check that the correct sources are in the automation system and familiarise themselves with points where commercial breaks need to be taken.

The playout provider's transmission staff will then liaise with the live programme production team confirming start time, finish times and any commercial break durations and positions.

Once the programme starts, the transmission staff will carefully watch the output and liaise with the production team, particularly about the timing of any commercial breaks. Normally, the point of liaison at the production team will be the broadcaster's Production Assistant (**PA**). The PA will alert the transmission staff that a break is imminent. They may also use a device called a cue dot which is a graphic in the corner of picture that is superimposed about

a minute before the break to be taken. When the cue dot disappears it is an indication the programme, or the programme part, should end in 5 seconds. At the clear end of the programme (part), the transmission staff will manually push a button that triggers the automation to run the break. They then advise the PA when the break will finish and the point where they should restart the next part.

The nature of live programming and the covering of live events means that actual timings cannot be as accurate or predictable as a pre-recorded programmes. The playout provider's transmission staff may need to deal with a programme finishing earlier or later. In these cases, they may have to go into the automation playlist to add or delete interstitial items at short notice which results in timing changes rippling through the schedule.

These procedures for the playout of live events are a feature of all channels that carry live programming.

Regionality

Regionality is the ability to split away from a main playout output to run bespoke content to a region or territory. For commercial broadcasters, this is usually commercial content but some (such as ITV) also run regional programming, primarily news. Whilst commercials are all run from the same automation system, regional news programming is fed into the playout centre on circuits (**[confidential]**).

The transmission staff usually have visibility of all the main regional feeds they have control of. In respect of regional news programming, they may have to initiate a switch to an alternative news region should the production team have operational difficulties.

However the main issue they have to deal with is the need to change commercials. Whilst there are different approaches in respect to the schedules/playlists for commercial regionality, it is often the case that a break can be made up of commercials that are in shown in the same commercial break across all regions and those that appear in a limited number. If a commercial change is requested by the broadcaster, it will require the transmission staff to manually go into each regional break and replace that commercial with the replacement specified by a broadcaster. If there are substantial commercial changes, some broadcasters have the facility to send a fresh schedule rather than rely on a sizeable manual process by the playout provider's transmission team.

These procedures for the playout of regional programmes/commercials are a feature of all channels that carry regional programming/commercials.

Schedule Error - external

Whilst extensive checking of the schedule prior to transmission by the playout provider should reduce the potential impact of errors it may not be obvious that the schedule is incorrect. One of the main errors on playout that the transmission staff may need to react to is material that has an incorrect duration or is different to what is scheduled because the production number is incorrect. If spotted in advance, the transmission team can liaise with the broadcaster to correct the error and make changes in the automation. If it is not obvious until the point of transmission, the transmission staff may need to take corrective action depending on the precise circumstances.

Such scheduling errors can occur on any channels.

Schedule Error - internal

These are impacts that are caused by any input errors made by playout provider's transmission team whilst maintaining the schedule. They could range from incorrect source allocation to incorrect timings for a programme. The corrective action required will be dependent on the precise circumstances and the nature of the impact but, in principle, is no different to the action taken to correct external schedule errors at the point of transmission.

Such scheduling errors can occur on any channels.

ADDITIONAL PROCESS DESCRIPTONS

Resend Schedule

Depending on the capabilities of the broadcaster's scheduling system and the playout provider's automation system, it may be possible to resend an updated version of a schedule or playlist. The changes may cover commercials and/or programming. The schedule may be completely or partly replaced, and will need to be re-prepared by the playout provider's transmission staff.

Contingency/Standby schedules

These are alternative schedules that are issued by the broadcaster to cover a particular period of a schedule, usually live programming such as sport. These schedules are prepared in the same way as the main schedule. Depending on the configuration of the playout automation system, these can be run simultaneously on the duplicated side of the system that is in place for resilience. Alternatively, they may need to be loaded at a particular point. In a football match that goes to extra time for example, it may not be certain that the contingency schedule for extra time is needed so that it only loaded onto the automation when the end of full time whistle has been blown.

Service continuity

The playout provider's transmission staff will endeavour to minimise the impact of a technical failure. What actions they need to take will be dependent on the nature of the issue but they will focus on ensuring that there is as much continuity of service to the viewer. This may result in last minute editing to the playlist to reinsert key items that were 'lost' (e.g. a graphic fails that promotes a programme, the transmission staff ask the continuity announcer to promote the same programme over a different graphic or over an ident).

Many broadcasters have a specified breakdown procedure they wish to be followed if there is an extended outage. The transmission staff would anyway be responsible for alerting other members of the playout provider's technical team, keeping the broadcaster informed about the issue, and taking any further feasible actions the broadcaster wishes to implement.