

Understanding the UK digital phone switchover

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This guide will help you understand the changes that are happening within the UK in the digital phone switchover, and what it could mean for you.

Introduction

The UK is moving away from the old copper telephone network to a new digital telephone system that uses the internet. This change has already begun and is due to be complete by 31st January 2027. You may hear this process referred to as the 'Digital Switchover' and the new digital phone service as 'Digital Voice' (BT), Sky Voice, Talk Talk Voice or VoIP 'Voice over Internet Protocol'.

[For those that already have a broadband connection the switchover should be straightforward](#)

If there is already an internet connection in your home, the switchover will probably only require you to plug your existing phone cable into your broadband router. Your phone provider will contact you to let you know your switchover date.

Customers won't be made to move to the new digital phone lines until they are ready, but they will need to move by January 2027. Be reassured that in most cases once you are moved you will be able to use your existing phone and keep your existing number.

Vulnerable customers

Digital phone lines are unavailable if there is a power cut or when the internet is interrupted, so phone providers are required to put in place back-up procedures for vulnerable customers. These are people who don't have a mobile phone or who have services that rely on a phone line - these 'resilience solutions' should be free. Vulnerable customers include:

- people aged 75 and over
- people who have disclosed any additional needs
- people who only have a landline (and not broadband)
- people with telecare alarms
- people with no mobile signal at home.

Providers may not be aware someone is vulnerable and so if you think you fit any of the above criteria then it is worth flagging yourself to your provider. This means special provisions can be put in place. In the rest of this guide we will look at the options available to you if you do not have the internet and so are not currently ready to switch to a digital phone line.

Information from the main phone providers

The main phone and alarm system providers have procedures in place to support the switchover process. Contact your provider directly for more information.

- BT <https://www.bt.com/broadband/digital-voice>
- TALK TALK <https://new.talktalk.co.uk/digital-voice>
- VIRGIN MEDIA <https://www.virginmedia.com/help/digital-voice-switchover>



- PLUSNET <https://www.plus.net/help/my-account/changes-to-broadband-and-phone-faqs/>

Your options if you don't currently have the internet in your home are:

1. Get a digital phone line without the internet

If you don't want an internet connection to your home, you will still be moved over to a digital phone line. Your phone provider will arrange this for them at no extra cost. Be aware that if you are reliant on a phone line the digital phone line won't work in a power cut. If you are vulnerable then make your provider aware and they will need to provide a back-up solution.

2. Using a mobile phone as an alternative to a landline

Mobile phones are a good backup if the digital phone line is down, but they are also an alternative to having a phone line to your property. Most providers now offer broadband only packages (no landline) if you are thinking of getting broadband. Use our guide to help someone choose a mobile phone www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides/smartphones-tablets/smartphones/how-choose-smartphone.

3. Get connected to the internet

The move to digital phone lines is a good opportunity to consider getting connected to the internet at home. We have a number of guides that cover getting access to devices and the internet :

- **Finding affordable kit and connectivity** www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides/using-internet/connecting-internet/finding-affordable-kit-and-connectivity
- **Getting online if you have a low credit score** www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides/using-internet/connecting-internet/getting-internet-if-you-have-low-credit-score

A note on special devices such as telecare and alarms

Some home healthcare monitors and alarms rely on a phone line. Providers of these services are aware of the switchover, if their service doesn't work with the new digital phone lines they should be in contact to offer a solution to upgrade. If you are unsure if your alarm will continue to work, you should contact the provider of the alarm system. As digital phone lines can go down in a power cut, phone providers will be required to provide back-up solutions to anyone who is reliant on a phone line, this might include battery back-ups. You should not agree to switch to a digital phone line until these back-up solutions are in place. This guide from Age UK is useful for anyone worried about their personal alarm systems: <https://personalalarms.ageco.co.uk/blogs/remaining-independent/will-personal-alarm-work-after-digital-telephone-switchover>.

Beware of digital switchover scams!

If you have an existing landline and an internet connection then there is no charge for switching to a digital phone line. Most existing phone handsets will not need updating. Healthcare devices, such as telecare devices, may need updating, but this should also be provided free or minimal cost by your provider.

Beware as there have been reports of digital switchover scams where people are contacted via phone or email and asked for their personal or financial details and threatened to be disconnected. Never give out your personal and bank details over the phone/email as your provider should already have these. Scams should be reported to **Action Fraud** <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> Tel: 0300 1232040.




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Next steps

- ▶ [What is the internet?](#)
- ▶ [How to stay safe online](#)
- ▶ [How to connect to the internet](#)



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