



BT Digital Switchover FAQ's; March 2024

Timescales

What is the timetable for the switch?

- The switch from analogue to digital landlines is a technological change that will see the decades old, analogue equipment in the local telephone exchanges replaced with more modern, digital technology.
- In 2017, the telecoms industry announced its intention to retire the old analogue technology known as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by the end of 2025 and upgrade landline services to new digital technology, where calls are made over a broadband line.
- BT has already switched around 2.5 million of its 10 million customers to its new home phone service, Digital Voice, and is contacting customers on a region by region basis - <https://newsroom.bt.com/bt-announces-regional-rollout-schedule-for-digital-voice/>
- For more information on the industry wide switch, please visit:
 - UK Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-transition-from-analogue-to-digital-landlines>
 - Ofcom: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/future-of-landline-calls>

Who will inform the customers of the switch over?

- Communications Providers (the company who supplies your phone or broadband line) will be in touch ahead of the switch and will talk you through the steps you need to take.
- Customers who choose to make the switch, without being contacted by their Communications Provider will receive all details as their order progresses.
- Customers who identify as vulnerable, have additional needs or any concerns, should speak to their Communications Provider to let them know about their circumstances ahead of the switch.

When will customers be informed that the switch is going to happen in their area and by whom?

- Customers will be contacted ahead of the switch by their Communications Provider.
- BT customers will receive general awareness communications followed by an invite to a regional event or roadshow in their region.
- BT will then contact customers at least four weeks in advance before making the switch, to ensure they are ready to move to Digital Voice.
- We then follow up with a number of pieces of information relating to the switch from the beginning until the day of the switch.
- Timescales and approach may differ depending on the Communications Provider.
- Customers with additional needs can also nominate a family member, friend or carer to help them through the switch who will receive all the information about switching on their behalf.
- Most customers will not need an appointment. Existing broadband customers will be able to plug their existing phone into the back of their broadband router instead of into the wall-mounted phone socket. Those customers without broadband will be sent a router in advance of the switch.
- If customers need any additional support with set up, or if they have additional needs, BT will arrange for an engineer to make a home visit. Their switch

won't go ahead until they have spoken to an advisor and booked an appointment.

- Non-BT customers are advised to speak to their Communications Provider to understand how the switch to a digital landline will affect them.

Process

Given that the government has announced that vulnerable people, such as those who use telecare, will be covered by a set of principles, how will you identify vulnerable people? This is not simple because while some are supplied with these facilities by social services or medical practitioners', others obtain them independently so there is unlikely to be a single register.

- In December 2023, we welcomed the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology announcement on the introduction of new measures to protect vulnerable customers - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-better-protect-vulnerable-customers-agreed-with-telecoms-firms>
- We responded with our own blog - <https://newsroom.bt.com/digital-voice-signing-up-to-the-charter-of-commitments/>
- Along with other Communications Providers we have temporarily paused all non-voluntary, managed migrations to a digital landline where there is any risk that a customer's telecare service will not continue to work.
- We are also temporarily moving from an opt-out to an opt-in approach, where customers will be asked to confirm that they're happy to go ahead via a two-way text, and we'll use the pause to work with Local Authorities and telecare providers to put information sharing agreements in place, so that we can identify telecare users ahead of the switch.
- We're advising any customer who uses a telecare device to get in touch with their equipment provider to check that their equipment is digital ready, and for any BT customer who has any questions, concerns or who hasn't told us about their circumstances should give us a call on 0330 1234 150.
- On the 29th January, The Telecare Action Board (TAB) was launched. The Action Board brings together all organisations involved in the switch from

analogue to digital landlines, to ensure the safe migration of vulnerable customers and telecare users.

- The work of the TAB will:
 - Make sure that everyone complies with their obligations and delivers on their commitments to customers as set out in the PSTN Charter
 - Agrees ways of working to overcome common issues and to successfully identify vulnerable customers and telecare users before they switch to a digital landline
- Members of the TAB include: all major Communication Providers (CPs), HM Government, Ofcom, the Local Government Association and other key local government representatives, trade bodies and telecare providers.
- Whilst there is no industry wide definition of 'vulnerable' we define vulnerable customers as anyone who needs extra support due to long term or short-term changes in their circumstances. This change could be due to age, a physical or learning disability or difficulty in communicating. If customers identify as vulnerable or have a carer who has concerns, we are urging them to get in touch so we can explore how best support them -
<https://www.bt.com/about/digital-impact-and-sustainability/our-approach/our-policies-and-report/bt-vulnerability-policy#:~:text=If%20you%27re%20in%20a,to%20Friday%208am%20to%205pm>.
- Our Here for You site is also there to help the millions of people in the UK living with an impairment. <https://www.bt.com/help/here-for-you>

How will engineers identify themselves, and will BT monitor that these arrangements are being adhered to?

- If an appointment is required, BT will send confirmation of the appointment date and time slot. Customers who are sent a new broadband router will need to keep it handy. On the day of your appointment, we'll send you a text with your engineer's name and mobile number.
- They will call you to confirm their arrival time and to find out about any access requirements. All of our engineers wear proof of ID.

How will connections be tested? Will the engineers who make the switch ensure that any new connections are working before they leave?

- Our engineers will ensure that your connection is tested and working properly before leaving the premises. They can also show you how the new technology will work, although for most customers, the switch will be as simple as plugging their existing phone into the back of their broadband router.

Will there be information left for the customer in case problems arise, for example a, troubleshooting sheet, or a help line?

- Ahead of the switch, BT will send correspondence that explains the changes in an easy-to-understand way.
- You can also find more information about our Digital Voice service on our website, which includes a video on how it all works.
<https://www.bt.com/broadband/digital-voice>
- You can contact BT on 0330 1234 150 should you have any issues.

Costs and Use

Will there be any change to the continuing cost of connection?

- There is no difference in price for the Digital Voice home phone service compared to the analogue system.
- For most of our customers, it is a simple and free transition to our Digital Voice service with no home installation work required.
- All new Digital Voice customers have the option to request a complimentary new Digital Voice compatible adapter for handsets in other rooms and a discounted handset to ensure they experience the full benefits.

Will customers need a new, different style of telephone receiver? (There are reasons why people need a choice including severe hearing loss, poor eyesight and difficulty using their hands.)

- We estimate that 99% of current handsets in customers' homes will continue to work with Digital Voice, they just need to be plugged in to the back of a router (Smart Hub 2) instead of the telephone socket.
- For customers with additional needs, such as those with health pendants, or without mobile coverage, we are offering battery back-up units for free, on request. The battery back-up units last for at least two hour's talk time and broadband signal.

If so, will there be financial help for people on low incomes?

- When you switch to a digital phone line you can still use your current home phone by plugging it into the back of your hub. If you need an adaptor, you can order one for free.
- For low income customers, we have BT Home Essentials Broadband <https://www.bt.com/broadband/home-essentials>
- A reliable and affordable way for people on specific state benefits, including Universal Credit and Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit), to have a low-cost broadband and phone package.

How will using the new telephone lines be different from the ones customers have at present?

- Whilst BT and others will be switching off the old analogue kit in the exchange, this doesn't mean the end of the landline.
- The landline is here to stay and the move to digital landlines will see the vast majority of customers making calls the same way they do today, but with technology that uses a broadband connection.
- For BT customers, when they switch to Digital Voice – BT's new landline service – they will benefit from our advanced scam call shielding named Call Protect.
- This uses AI technology to identify scam callers – matching the characteristics of the caller with scam call numbers and behaviours – to stay one step ahead of scammers.
- We will also be introducing advanced caller ID capabilities, which will enable customers to easily identify who is calling them.

What will happen to customers who use their telephone lines for broadband to drive computers?

- Customers will be able to use their broadband line in the same way as they do today, and they won't experience any change in their service when they move to Digital Voice.

Problem solving

What will happen if the broadband reception is poor in the areas where customers live? This is a common problem in Norfolk, even in urban areas.

- Broadband runs over the same wires and cables as phone lines do today and whilst large broadband outages are rare, we want to reassure its customers that in line with our service obligations, we'll make sure they have the connectivity they need.
- Openreach are also investing £15 billion to build full fibre broadband to 25 million homes and businesses by the end of 2026 – reaching 13m premises to date.
- For the very small percentage of the population without access to broadband, or decent mobile coverage, we'll be offering a dedicated landline service, allowing customers to use their landline in the same way as they do today, so their phone will continue to be plugged into the socket on the wall rather than into the back of a broadband router. This service will be available from late 2024 and will keep customers connected to their existing service until they're able to move over to Digital Voice or an alternative.
- Customers with additional needs such as health pendants, or who are over 70 or without mobile coverage, can take advantage of free additional support, on request, depending on their needs. These options range from free battery back-up units, to engineer supported installations or a hybrid landline phone, which features a long battery life and can connect either via broadband or via our mobile network.

What will happen in the event of the internet failing?

- In the event of a broadband outage, we will look to restore service in line with our existing service obligations.
- We estimate that less than 1% of our landline customer's premises have insufficient mobile signal to make an emergency call. This number will drop as we continue to invest in building the mobile Shared Rural Network. Under this programme we have already built or upgraded over 1,500 sites, providing reliable 4G connectivity to an additional 2,000+ square miles of rural landmass across the four UK nations.
- We continue to invest in our ambition to enable a 5G solution to be possible anywhere in the UK by 2028. Earlier this year, we announced the arrival of 5G in over 500 smaller towns and villages across the UK, as well as the first 5G in National Parks including The Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and The Broads. This complements our leading 4G network, which stretches more than 2,500 square miles further than anyone else and is on course to pass 90% of the UK's geographic landmass by the mid-2020s.
- Emergency calls can be made on any mobile phone network. If a customer lives in an area where their network doesn't have reception, but another does, they will get Emergency Calls Only.
- Some mobile handsets are beginning to offer the capability of sending messages over low earth orbit (LEO) satellites. Satellite connectivity provides options for coverage in very hard to reach areas. We expect this capability to grow over time.

What will happen in the event of a power cut?

- In the event of a power cut, if they are able to do so, customers should use their mobile as an alternative to their landline. This is the simplest, most reliable back-up for landline users. Mobiles generally have 12-24hr battery life (often longer) and they can also be charged in the car in the event of a long-lasting domestic power outage.
- For Digital Voice customers without a mobile, we're developing a hybrid phone that can switch to a mobile network and has an in-built battery. We

would also encourage these customers to buy a low-cost 4G mobile phone if they are comfortable doing so.

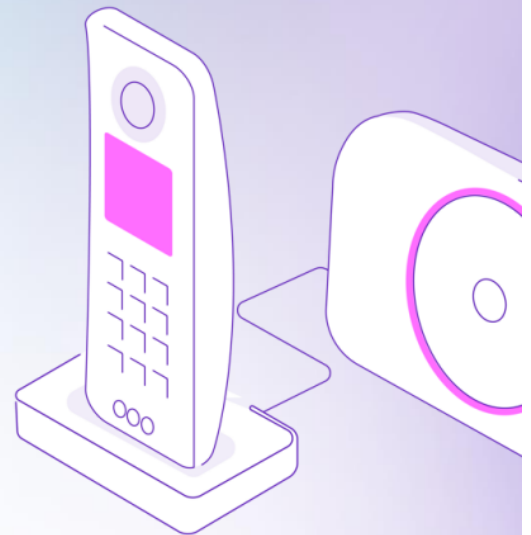
- For Digital Voice customers identified as vulnerable and live in an area without mobile signal, we will provide a battery back-up unit free of charge.
- Ofcom's industry requirement is for providers to ensure access to emergency organisations for a minimum of one hour in the event of a power outage. Our BBUs and hybrid phones have been designed to provide a minimum of two hours back-up in the event a power outage, depending on usage.
- We have 100% power resilience in our core network, which provides the underlying technology that powers our fixed and mobile networks. At the edges of those networks where customers access connectivity (in fixed this is Green Cabinets and in mobile these are masts) we have a variety of power resilience measures. Green cabinets support up to 4 hours back up while many mobile sites either have a generator on site or have overlapping coverage with other masts.

What arrangements will be in place to avoid vulnerable people being put at risk if the internet fails or there is a power cut?

- The same protocol above applies to both vulnerable and non-vulnerable people.
- BT are working with the DVAG (Digital Voice Advisory Group) to ensure all users are moved over correctly.
- There are 2 million vulnerable people who have greater dependency on their phone lines which is deemed as anyone with no mobile signal, additional needs, elderly (over 75), only a landline and no internet and/ or has any telecare equipment
- These vulnerable customers are omitted from the 'forced' digital switchover. They will also be offered the power back-ups for free.

A guide to Digital Voice

Digital Voice is BT's new home phone service, powered by your broadband connection



For most customers, the switch to Digital Voice will be as simple as connecting your home phone handset to a router rather than the phone socket on the wall.

BT is inviting customers to switch to its digital home phone service on a region-by-region basis.



Over 99% of phone handsets are compatible with our digital home phone service. And if yours isn't compatible, we have a range of handsets that you can add to your order.

FREE

For most BT customers, it is a simple and completely free transition to Digital Voice with no home installation work required. And you can keep your current phone number.



Digital Voice prevents the majority of scam calls, provides clearer call quality and allows users to easily divert calls to their mobile if they're out of the house.



Customers will be contacted four weeks before making the switch, to help ensure they're ready to make the move.

What about customers with additional needs?

Initially, we won't be proactively switching over customers (where this information is available):

- with a healthcare pendant
- who only use landlines
- with no mobile signal
- who have disclosed any additional needs

BT will take extra time and will provide additional support to customers who are over 70 and are ready to make the switch. If customers want to make the switch to Digital Voice, they can contact BT at any time to do so.

What if there's a power cut?

We understand that for many, particularly those with additional needs, the landline is a lifeline. We want to be sure everyone remains connected. We've been working to make battery back-up units available to those that need them. Customers with additional needs such as health pendants or without mobile signal, can take advantage of free additional support, on request. We're also working closely with the power companies to establish processes which help them to restore power as quickly as possible.

For more information, visit www.bt.com/digital-voice



The landline is a lifeline for some customers

Around two million of our customers are more dependent on their home phone line and may feel more anxious about making the switch. No one will be left disconnected



No mobile phone signal



Vulnerable customers with additional needs



Customers with Healthcare pendants or alarms



Elderly customers



Landline-only customers

We're taking our time with these customers and they wont be switched just yet

What happens in the event of a power cut?



Battery back-up units (BBUs).



Hybrid phones with built-in batteries, which switch to mobile network connection when necessary.

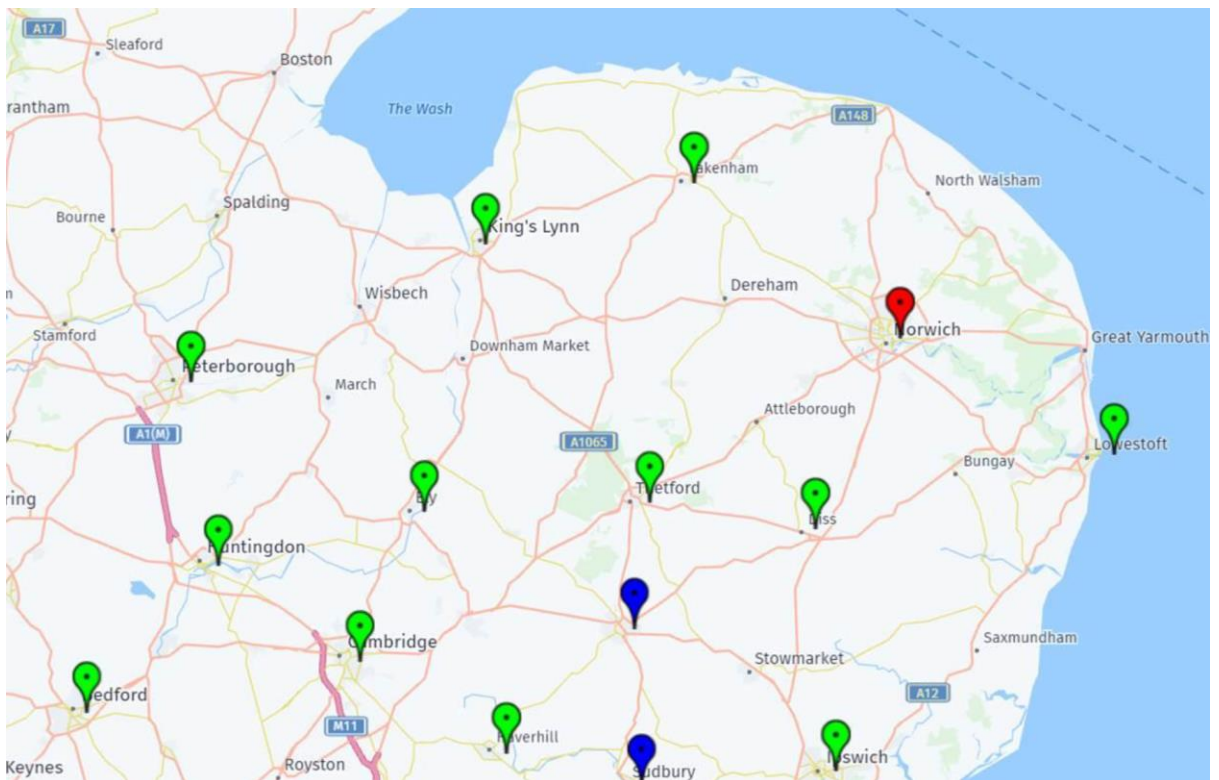
The charter of commitments for customers with Telecare

Communications Providers must:

1. Not undertake any non-voluntary migrations, until they have **full confidence they are taking all possible steps to protect vulnerable people** through the migration process.
2. Not migrate Telecare users without CP's, the customer, or the telecare company **confirming they have a compatible and functioning telecare solution** in place.
3. Work to provide battery backup solutions **that go beyond the Ofcom minimum of 1 hour of continued access** to emergency services in the event of a power outage.
4. Collectively work with Ofcom and Government to create a **shared definition of 'vulnerable' customer groups** that require greater support, specific to the digital landline migration.
5. Conduct checks on customers who've already been migrated to **ensure they don't have telecare devices we were unaware of**, and if they do, ensure suitable support is provided.

Data Sharing Agreements are essential to ensure CP's know which customers have Telecare devices. BT are working with private Telecare Providers and Local Authorities to get these agreements in place.

Digital Switchover Events in May 2024



Information video –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7YmHG7cEno>