



Digital Television Switchover Media Briefing

digitaluk.co.uk/press

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about **switchover**

What is digital TV switchover?

Switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels broadcast from more than a thousand transmitter sites will be switched off region by region and replaced with Freeview digital TV and radio services.

Why is it happening?

Households in many parts of the UK are currently unable to receive Freeview services. Switching off the existing analogue broadcasting system will create the capacity necessary to extend coverage to the whole country. Broadcasting in digital format is also a more efficient way to transmit television signals and will free up airwaves for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband and mobile television. Switching the terrestrial TV system to digital will ensure the UK keeps pace with other leading countries, many of which are also switching to all digital broadcasting.

What is Digital UK?

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation set up by the main UK broadcasters to implement digital switchover. The company, launched in September 2005, is jointly owned and funded by the public-service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Five, S4C and Teletext), and digital multiplex operators SDN and National Grid Wireless. Digital UK runs national and regional information campaigns and provides information to the public via a help line (08546 50 50 50) and website (www.digitaluk.co.uk).

What do viewers need to do?

Viewers must ensure that their TVs are capable of receiving a digital signal in order to continue receiving television services after switchover. Virtually any TV, even black and white ones, can be converted with a digital box. Anyone buying new TV equipment should look for the 'digital tick' logo (below) which identifies equipment designed to work before, during and after switchover.



What are the different ways to get digital TV?

There are four main options, depending where you live:

- **Through an aerial** (eg Freeview, Top Up TV, BT Vision*), either through a digital box or a television with an integrated digital tuner (an iDTV)
- **By satellite** (eg Sky, Freesat)
- **Through a cable** (eg Virgin Media, Wight Cable or SmallWorld)
- **Over broadband** (eg Tiscali TV)

*Requires broadband connection

A postcode checker on the Digital UK website (www.digitaluk.co.uk) tells viewers which options are available in their area now and after switchover.

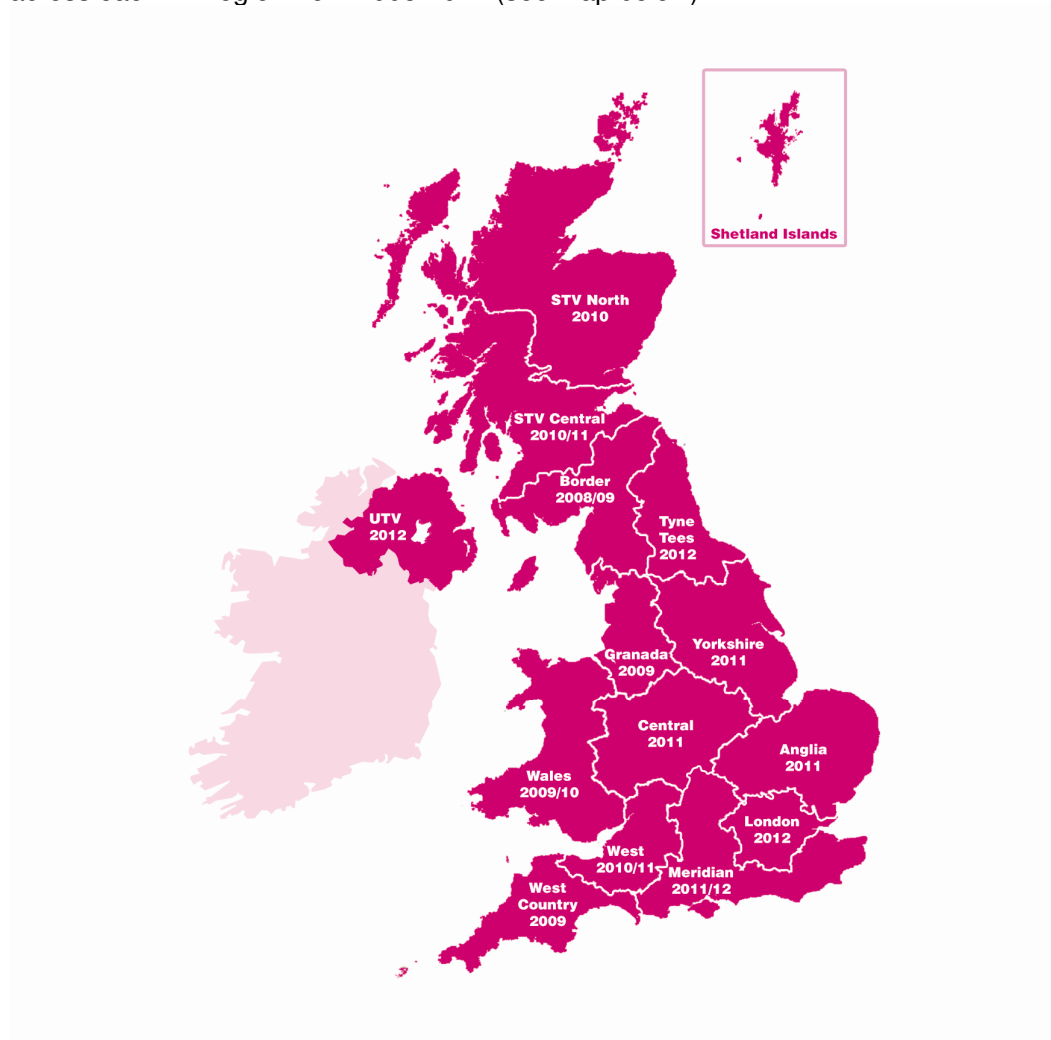
How much does digital television cost?

Most homes already have digital television on the main set. For those getting digital for the first time or who are converting secondary sets around the home, the cost will vary according to the number of TVs and method of conversion. It's estimated that 5-10% of households may need to replace damaged aerials in order to receive Freeview signals.

- Freeview digital boxes start from approximately £25
- Integrated digital televisions start from approximately £100
- Freesat from Sky costs approximately £150 (includes installation)
- Freesat from BBC/ITV costs from £49 for a standard box and £80 for installation
- Subscription (eg Sky, Virgin, Top Up TV) starts from approximately £10 per month
- Digital television recorders start from approx £100
- A standard new roof aerial normally costs £60-180

When will switchover happen?

The UK's first switchover was completed in Copeland in Cumbria (including the town of Whitehaven) in November 2007. The process will continue transmitter by transmitter across each TV region from 2008-2012 (see map below).



What channels will viewers get?

Switchover will make Freeview television channels available across the UK. Viewers choosing to get digital television this way will be able to receive BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, C4 (and S4C in Wales) and Five plus a range of digital channels and services free via an aerial. Channel availability depends on where you live and which transmitter you get your signal from. Most households will be able to receive approximately 40 Freeview channels via an aerial; 20 of the most popular channels will be available elsewhere.

Viewers can find out more about digital TV options and the Freeview channels available in their area by visiting www.digitaluk.co.uk or calling Digital UK on **08456 50 50 50**.

What about recorders?

After switchover, analogue recorders will still be able to play tapes and discs but will need to be connected to a digital television or one which has been converted with a digital box in order to record programmes. Analogue recorders will also lose their independent recording function which means they will only be able to record the digital channel being watched. Viewers updating their recording equipment are recommended to look for a digital DVD recorder or a digital TV recorder which stores programmes on a hard disc and can pause or rewind live TV.

What help is available?

There is a range of switchover help available. Digital UK co-ordinates public information campaigns in each region during the lead up to switchover. It also operates a helpline (08456 50 50 50), website (www.digitaluk.co.uk) and postcode checker which informs viewers about the digital television services available in their area.

Digital UK also works with a range of organisations which provide information about digital television to consumers. They include broadcasters, digital platform operators, retailers and local authorities. In addition, it has formed a partnership with a consortium of national charities, including Age Concern and Help the Aged, which will provide information and advice to people who might need some extra help.

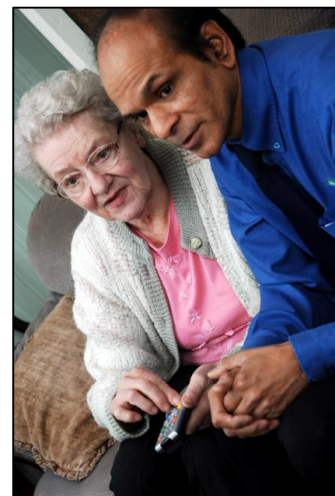
The **Switchover Help Scheme** has been established by the BBC to offer practical assistance at the time of switchover to approximately seven million households. The scheme will cover households in which one person or more:

- is aged 75 years or over; or
- has a significant disability – eg claims disability living allowance or attendance allowance; or
- is registered blind or partially sighted

Eligible households will be offered the following:

- equipment to convert one television set
- installation and demonstration of equipment
- follow-up support

There will be a fee of £40 for the help. For eligible claimants who also receive income support, job seeker's allowance or pension credit, the help will be provided free.



For more information about the Switchover Help Scheme, visit <http://www.helpscheme.co.uk>

some numbers

Digital television switchover is one of the biggest changes to television since the introduction of colour. Here are some statistics illustrating the scale of the project.

60m the estimated number of television sets in the UK

22.2 million the number of UK households which have digital television on at least one set

14.2 million the number of secondary TVs now converted to digital

2.3 million the number of integrated digital televisions (with Freeview built in) sold in the last three months of 2007

1,124 the number of television transmitter sites around the country which will be upgraded for switchover

90% the proportion of UK adults aware of digital switchover

83% the proportion of shoppers able to recognise the 'digital tick' logo, which certifies switchover-ready products

9.6 million the number of households watching Freeview on their main TV

9.3 million the number of households watching digital satellite TV

3.3 million the number of households subscribing to digital cable TV

£5-10 billion the estimated benefit to the UK economy from spectrum released by switching to off analogue TV signals

7 million the number of households in the UK estimated to be eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme

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**NOTE: These contacts are for use by members of the media only.
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