



# Digital Television Switchover Media Briefing

[digitaluk.co.uk/press](http://digitaluk.co.uk/press)

JUNE 2009

# 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 Arqiva. Digital UK is running a £200m, seven-year national and regional information campaign and provides information to the public via a helpline (08546 50 50 50) and website ([digitaluk.co.uk](http://digitaluk.co.uk)).

## What do viewers need to do?

Most people have already converted their main TV to digital. 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 (right) which identifies equipment designed to work before, during and after switchover.



## What are the different ways to get digital TV?

There are three main options for going digital:

- **Convert your existing TV with a digital set-top box**  
(eg *Freeview, Top Up TV, BT Vision\**)
- **Get a service like satellite, cable or broadband TV installed for you**  
(eg *Sky, Freesat, Virgin Media, Wight Cable, SmallWorld or Tiscali TV*)
- **Get a new TV with digital built-in** (eg *Freeview, Freesat*)

\*Requires broadband connection

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

## How much does digital television cost?

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 cost around £20
- Integrated digital televisions start from around £150
- Freesat from Sky costs approximately £150 (includes installation)
- Freesat from BBC/ITV costs from £49 for a standard box and £80 for installation
- Subscriptions (e.g. Sky, Virgin, Top Up TV) start from approximately £10 per month
- Digital television recorders cost from around £80
- 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).



## 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 more than 40 Freeview channels via an aerial; 20 of the most popular channels will be available elsewhere (see the table below for a region by region breakdown).

Viewers can find out more about digital TV options and the Freeview channels available in their area by visiting [digitaluk.co.uk](http://digitaluk.co.uk) or calling Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50.

TV Region	Percentage of households that can currently receive digital TV via an aerial	Percentage of households able to receive more than 40 Freeview channels after switchover	Percentage of households able to receive approximately 20 Freeview channels after switchover
Anglia	57%	86%	96%
Border	51%	53%	98%
Central	76%	98%	99%
Granada	94%	97%	99%
London	88%	95%	99%
Meridian	61%	84%	97%
STV Central	91%	93%	99%
STV North	70%	79%	97%
Tyne Tees	91%	96%	99%
Ulster	66%	78%	98%
Wales	63%	73%	98%
West	81%	94%	99%
Westcountry	63%	74%	96%
Yorkshire	83%	97%	99%
<b>UK total</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>98.5%</b>

**Source: Ofcom, September 2008.** 20 refers to the total number of TV services available. As some services are broadcast on shared channels, the number available at any one time will be typically around 17.

## What other equipment is affected by switchover?

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, ie 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 disk and can pause or rewind live TV.

The Freeview signal will be improved at switchover in each region to make it less susceptible to interference and picture break-up. Some early digital televisions and digital boxes – in particular ON Digital (and ITV Digital) devices – are not compatible with this signal. Owners of affected digital boxes are advised to replace them with a product carrying the 'digital tick'. Affected televisions can be upgraded using a digital box.

A list of affected products is available at [digitaluk.co.uk/2kequipment](http://digitaluk.co.uk/2kequipment).

## Do viewers need HD TV equipment for switchover?

No. There's no need to buy HD equipment for digital switchover. Viewers choosing to do so should make sure it carries the 'digital tick' logo. HD services are currently available on satellite and cable.

## 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 ([digitaluk.co.uk](http://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. You are eligible for the scheme if you:



- are aged 75 years or over; or
- have lived in a care home for six months or more; or
- get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or
- are 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 [helpscheme.co.uk](http://helpscheme.co.uk)**

## Which TV channels are available on Freeview?

Switchover will make digital TV and radio available from local relay transmitters for the first time, extending Freeview coverage to 98.5% of UK households (the same as analogue coverage today). In areas yet to switch, digital terrestrial services are only available from main transmitters. Channel availability depends on where you live and the type of transmitter you get your signal from. Virtually all households will receive the five main terrestrial services – availability of other channels is subject to change.

Viewers can check the services available in their area by using the postcode checker at [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk), or by calling our helpline on 08456 505050. The table below shows the line up of free-to-air channels as of June 2009. Additional digital radio, text and subscription services are available in some areas.

<b>After switchover, the TV channels in bold will be available to virtually all UK households free via an aerial. Nine out of ten homes will also receive the additional channels shown.</b>	
<b>BBC One</b>	ITV2 +1
<b>BBC Two</b>	CITV
<b>ITV1</b>	E4+1
<b>Channel 4</b>	Film4
<b>S4C (Wales only)</b>	4Music
<b>FIVE</b>	Five USA
<b>Teletext/NHS Direct</b>	Fiver
<b>Teletext on 4</b>	Teletext Holidays
<b>BBC Three</b>	Teletext Casino
<b>BBC Four</b>	SuperCasino
<b>BBC News</b>	Sky Three
<b>CBeebies</b>	Sky News
<b>CBBC Channel</b>	Sky Spts News
<b>BBC Parliament</b>	Sky Text
<b>BBCi</b>	CNN
<b>ITV2</b>	Virgin1
<b>ITV3</b>	Virgin1+1
<b>ITV4</b>	Dave
<b>Channel 4+1</b>	Dave Ja Vu
<b>S4C2 (Wales only)</b>	TMF
<b>More4</b>	Yesterday
<b>E4</b>	QVC
<b>Community</b>	bid tv
<b>TeleG</b>	QUEST
<b>(Scotland only)</b>	Netplay
<b>Rabbit</b>	Ideal World
<b>Gay Rabbit</b>	Teachers' TV
<b>DirectGov</b>	Gems TV
	Gems TV1
	SmileTV
	SmileTV2
	Russia today
	Partyland
	Trove
	Rocks & Co.
	Lottery Xtra
	Dating 1-2-1

\* National variations apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



# some numbers

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

- 60m** Estimated number of television sets in the UK
- 22.7m** Number of UK households which have digital TV on at least one set
- 21.1m** Number of secondary TVs now converted to digital
- 4.4m** Number of integrated digital televisions (with Freeview built in) sold in the last six months of 2008
- 1,154** Number of TV television transmitter sites around the country which will be upgraded for switchover
- 90%** Proportion of UK adults aware of digital switchover in TV regions yet to switch
- 82%** Proportion of shoppers in areas yet to switch able to recognise the 'digital tick' logo, which certifies TV equipment that will work now, during and after switchover
- 9.6m** Number of households watching Freeview on their main TV
- 9.5m** Number of households watching digital satellite TV
- 3.3m** Number of households subscribing to digital cable TV
- £5-10bn** Estimated benefit to the UK economy from spectrum released by switching off analogue TV signals
- 7m** Number of households in the UK estimated to be eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme

(Sources: Digital UK Switchover Tracker Survey; Ofcom Digital Progress Report; Gfk Retail and Technology)

## your contacts

Digital UK Media Office: Tel 020 7462 5442  
Email: [media@digitaluk.co.uk](mailto:media@digitaluk.co.uk)

Public Relations (Fishburn Hedges): Tel 020 7544 3107

**NOTE: These contacts are strictly for use by members of the media only.  
If you are a member of the public, please visit [digitaluk.co.uk](http://digitaluk.co.uk)  
or ring 08456 50 50 50. This number can also be used for publication.**

**[digitaluk.co.uk/press](http://digitaluk.co.uk/press)**