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Press release



SUPPORT FOR SWITCHOVER LEGACY PROJECT

Digital UK today announced its backing for a scheme to build on the success of the UK's first television switchover in Copeland.

Two months on from completion of switchover, Ford Ennals, Digital UK Chief Executive, presented a grant to help establish a digital inclusion project run by Age Concern North West Cumbria, which will provide advice, assistance and training in new technologies for people of all ages.

The launch of the project coincided with the release of follow-up research into the UK's first switchover which saw four analogue services replaced with a line up of 20 digital channels. The research indicated that all households have converted to digital television and that the programme of communication and assistance worked well.

Speaking at the launch of the digital inclusion scheme, Ford Ennals said: "Copeland's place in broadcasting history is assured, not only as a digital pioneer but also in setting the standard for community involvement and support. The success of this first switchover depended on the many local organisations and volunteers who got involved and made sure people got the help they needed. The community-based approach we took in Copeland will be the model for switchovers to come all across the UK."

The scheme will allow existing digital volunteers to continue their work in the areas of digital television and to expand their work into different technologies. Key aims of the project will include:

- Establishing a Digital Inclusion Centre in Whitehaven to provide advice and support in using a range of digital technologies, such as computers, email and the internet
- Developing the 'Digipal' volunteer network set up for switchover, helping people get the best from digital television and other new technologies
- Providing computer courses for older people and those seeking to improve their employment prospects

At a ceremony in Whitehaven on January 17, Mr Ennals presented Age Concern North West Cumbria with a one-off grant to help establish the inclusion scheme. He said: "Contributing to this project is our legacy to a community which has paved the way for successful switchovers elsewhere. It's an exciting idea which goes beyond our original focus of television, and we're delighted to join our partner organisations in delivering it."

Mary Bradley, Director of Age Concern North West Cumbria, said: "The switch to digital television brought forward new volunteers and organisations to support the community. We are determined to continue their good work and to extend that support to new areas where possible. I'd like to thank Digital UK for sharing our desire to see a positive legacy from the first switchover which will enable more people to benefit from a range of new technologies."

Research for Digital UK shows that Copeland viewers responded well to the switchover process and that the arrival of digital terrestrial television has proved popular.

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The research found that:

- Virtually all homes had converted their main television to digital by the second stage of switchover on November 14 and by mid December, 95% of secondary sets were converted
- Most households converting to digital television did so shortly before October 17
- Of the homes getting digital TV for the first time, 60% chose Freeview and 40% chose Sky
- 95% said digital TV was as good as or better than analogue television
- Most homes (81%) said they received sufficient information; 15% would have liked more
- 94% of households interviewed after switchover felt either positive or neutral about it
- Most (74%) people were not worried by switchover
- 5-10% of people expressed concerns about cost, support for the elderly and not receiving the full line up of Freeview channels
- 84% said they were aware that switchover would affect analogue recorders
- The Digital Switchover Help Scheme was contacted by 6,400 out of 9,400 qualifying households, and has supplied or installed equipment for the 2,600 who asked for it. All households who requested help have now received it.

A panel of 25 households also provided information about how their viewing had changed with the arrival of digital television. Most (67%) had spent time exploring the wider choice of channels with the majority saying they liked the new services.

A review of the switchover process conducted by the Copeland Digital Group, which draws together representatives from a range of local organisations, said: "The switch to digital has been recognised as a very positive change, on the whole well managed and well received, with several benefits for local people and for the area."

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Research sources:

1. GFK/NOP: 189 Copeland households were questioned from November 15 to December 18 2007.
2. QMedia: 25 households' experience of switchover was tracked in face-to-face and telephone interviews from July to December 2007.

Digital UK is the independent body implementing the UK's switch to digital television. The company communicates switchover to the public; manages the upgrade of 1,154 transmitters for digital; and works with industry to ensure understanding and support for switchover. Digital UK was set up by the public-service broadcasters, and offers independent switchover advice to the public through its helpline (08456 50 50 50) and website (digitaluk.co.uk).

Switchover will create a fairer situation in which everyone has access to a choice of affordable digital TV services. Between 2008 and 2012, all TV services in the UK will go completely digital, region by region. The UK's old analogue television signal is being switched off and replaced with a digital signal, a process that will also allow the UK to remain a world leader in broadcasting.

Images are available to media from vismedia.co.uk

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