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Press release

digitaluk

NORTH EAST GOES DIGITAL IN 100 DAYS

Viewers urged to prepare for the end of analogue TV

With just 100 days until the end of analogue TV in the North East, Digital UK and Gateshead Harriers are urging viewers to 'get set' for switchover this September.

Switchover begins in the Tyne Tees region on 12 September, as analogue signals are switched off and Freeview coverage is boosted to reach virtually all homes. The process will finish two weeks later on 26 September, also marking the completion of switchover in England.

Local hurdlers Rebecca Liddell and Richard Kaufman were limbering up for switchover alongside mascot Digit AI at Gateshead Stadium today. Staff from Digital UK will be visiting the area over the coming months to advise viewers on any obstacles they may face getting ready for the biggest change to television in a generation.

Latest research¹ indicates most people are well prepared, with more than nine out of ten households already having made the switch to digital TV. Those still watching in analogue are now being urged to get ready or risk being left with a blank screen.

Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme have stepped up their communications campaigns across the region. Roadshows will start from this week and a detailed 20-page guide to switchover is being sent to every household. On-screen messages are also appearing on viewers' sets, backed by TV, press and radio advertising.

The Help Scheme (helpscheme.co.uk) is writing to eligible older and disabled people, reminding them of the assistance on offer to convert one TV set to digital, including a choice of equipment, installation and aftercare. The help is available for those aged 75 and over; or who are eligible for certain disability benefits; or registered blind or partially sighted; or living in care homes.

John Askew, Digital UK's Regional Manager for the North East, said: "Most people have already made the switch to digital but we know some people may leave it until the last minute, or need a little extra advice to overcome that final hurdle. We're urging anyone still watching analogue television to make the change now and to contact the Help Scheme if they're eligible for practical support.

"Anyone who still needs advice on switching can visit the Digital UK website or call our advice line. We'll also be holding roadshows and advice clinics at the time of switchover."

Viewers can check their switchover date and options for getting digital TV by using the Digital UK postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk or by ringing 08456 50 50 50.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

* Source: Digital UK switchover tracker survey (to June 2012).

1. How switchover happens

Switchover will happen in two stages on **12 and 26 September**. At stage one, analogue BBC Two is turned off and BBC Freeview digital channels will become available to viewers watching local relay transmitters for the first time. At stage two, all remaining analogue channels will be switched off and further Freeview channels from ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 will launch from relays. Free HD services will also become available from all transmitters. All viewers will need a digital TV service to continue receiving television.

Homes watching TV from the Bilsdale transmitter will need a wideband aerial to be sure of receiving all available Freeview channels after switchover.

2. Channel availability

Before switchover, Freeview channels are available from main transmitter sites only, offering viewers with digital TVs or set top boxes a line-up of more than 40 channels. Switchover will see more than 1,000 local relay transmitters upgraded to digital. After switchover, relay transmitters will broadcast around 15 Freeview TV channels, including BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 plus associated services such as ITV2 and BBC Three. Viewers can use the postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to check channel availability in their area. Digital TV is also available via cable, satellite and broadband.

3. The Switchover Help Scheme

People aged 75 and over, eligible for certain disability benefits, registered blind or partially sighted or living in care homes are entitled to practical help from the BBC-run Switchover Help Scheme. For £40, they will be given equipment to switch one TV per household to digital. They will be able to have that equipment installed if they want it, a demonstration of how it works and a number to call while they get used to things. If they're eligible and also on income-related benefits, the help will be free. Everyone eligible will be contacted directly before switchover. More information is available on 0800 40 85 900 and online at helpscheme.co.uk.

Digital TV switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Finishing in October 2012, analogue channels will be switched off region by region and replaced with free-to-air digital TV and radio services (Freeview). Switchover will extend Freeview coverage to the whole of the UK and free up airwaves for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband and mobile television. Digital services are also available via broadband, cable and satellite.

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2005 to lead the implementation of digital switchover. It is jointly owned and funded by the public-service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5), and the digital multiplex operators.

The Switchover Help Scheme is run by the BBC under an agreement with the Government to help older and disabled people make the change to digital TV. More information is available from helpscheme.co.uk.

The engineering work for TV switchover is being undertaken by **Arqiva**, as owner and operator of the transmitter network.

Images are available to media free of charge at digitaluk.co.uk/press. Follow us on **Twitter** for live updates on switchover at twitter.com/DigitalUK.

Contacts

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