

# Calling all tenants

Working with your landlord or property manager to get your communal TV aerial ready for switchover



# What is the digital TV switchover?






TV services in the UK are going digital, TV region by TV region. It started in 2007 in Whitehaven, in Cumbria and will be followed by the rest of the UK between 2008 and 2012. This process is called the digital TV switchover. To find out when your TV region will be affected go to [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk)

## What does switchover mean for tenants?

To get ready for the digital switchover you may need to upgrade or adapt all your TV equipment to receive digital signals.

If you live in a flat or share an aerial with another household it is possible that you receive your TV signals through a communal TV aerial system. Many of these systems will need to be upgraded or adapted to receive digital signals. This is in addition to the equipment in your home.

There are different ways that homes can receive digital TV:

	<b>Through an aerial</b>	e.g Freeview
	<b>Through an aerial &amp; phone line</b>	e.g BT Vision
	<b>Through a phone line</b>	e.g Tiscali TV
	<b>Through a satellite</b>	e.g. Sky TV, Freesat from Sky, freesat
	<b>Through a cable</b>	e.g Virgin Media

## What do I need to do?

It doesn't matter whether your home is rented privately or from a public or social housing organisation, if you use a communal TV aerial system you will need to speak to your landlord, letting agent, property manager or factor to make sure that it is checked and, if necessary, upgraded to receive digital TV signals. Otherwise, you could be left with a blank TV screen after switchover.



# Who is responsible for doing the work and paying for it?

- 1** Check what your tenancy agreement, contract, or licence says as to who is responsible for the aerial. In most cases if you live in a block of flats then your landlord or property manager will usually organise any works but can re-charge the costs involved to the tenants, so you should first ask them about their TV switchover plans. If you live in a house then you are likely to be responsible for looking after the aerial and paying for any works that are needed; but check your tenancy agreement or get permission before starting any work.
- 2** If there is nothing in your tenancy agreement, contract, or licence about who is responsible for any works to the communal aerial look to see if there is a service charge schedule (annexed to the agreement). If provision or maintenance of TV services or infrastructure is listed, your landlord or property manager is responsible, but will usually be entitled to recover the costs of the upgrading works from you and the other tenants.
- 3** If nothing is listed but the property has a communal TV system maintained by your landlord or property manager, it may be that the communal aerial is paid for as part of the overall rent and is not listed as a separate service cost. Under the terms of your agreement, your landlord or property manager may be able to review and change your rent to reflect the costs of upgrading the system.
- 4** If you live in a flat, you may not be allowed to put up an aerial or satellite dish because of potential damage to the building, inappropriate siting, planning constraints or health and safety issues. If you are allowed to put up your own aerial or satellite dish then you are responsible for maintaining it, but you could still have to contribute to the costs of installing and maintaining the communal system.
- 5** If tenants are not allowed put up their own aerials or satellite dishes then the landlord or property manager needs to ensure that access to TV signals is maintained. The Communications Act 2003 s.134 says that landlords may not unreasonably withhold consent from tenants who wish to install equipment themselves. However, one communal TV aerial system - known as an Integrated Reception System (IRS) - will carry satellite services as well as Freeview. This is a popular option and many landlords and property managers are choosing an IRS that will support Sky+ and freesat.
- 6** Whatever you do, don't leave it to the last minute. Speak to your landlord or property manager about their plans now.

## What do I do if my landlord will not upgrade the communal TV aerial system?

You can act independently but if there is a residents' association or a tenants' group who could represent your views, you and the other tenants could act together through them to talk to or petition your landlord or property manager.

If your landlord or property manager is unwilling to check or upgrade your communal aerial system then contact your MP or local councillor and ask for assistance in persuading them to take action. If it is the landlord's responsibility under the terms of your agreement to check or upgrade the system, you could, if all else fails, take legal action through the courts to enforce the terms of the agreement.



## Local Authority Tenants

If you feel that your local authority has not addressed your concerns appropriately you can ask your local councillors to intervene. If this does not resolve the problem your MP can refer the matter to a Local Government Ombudsman on your behalf. There is a local government ombudsman, or equivalent, in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They deal with complaints from members of the public about their treatment by local government departments and other public sector bodies.

England  
The Local Government Ombudsman  
[www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

Wales  
Public Service Ombudsman for Wales  
[www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Scotland  
Public Services Ombudsman for Scotland  
[www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

Northern Ireland  
The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland  
The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints  
[www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk)

## Tenants of Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords

If a complaint to your landlord has failed or is unresolved, you can put in a formal complaint to the appropriate Housing Ombudsman. They will expect you to have been through the organisation's internal complaints procedures before they will get involved.

England  
The Independent Housing Ombudsman Service  
[www.ihos.org.uk](http://www.ihos.org.uk)

Wales  
Welsh Assembly Government  
[www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

Scotland  
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
[www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

Northern Ireland  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
[www.nihe.org.uk](http://www.nihe.org.uk)

## Further Advice and Information

Help may be available for tenants through a local Housing Aid and Advice Centre, Law Centre or a Citizens' Advice Bureau ([www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)). Information for flat owners can be found at [www.digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers)

For more information on the digital TV switchover contact Digital UK:

Call us **08456 50 50 50\***  
Visit us **digitaluk.co.uk**

Digital UK is working with:



\*Standard BT rates apply. Rates may vary for calls from other providers including mobile operators. The standard business hours for Digital UK's contact centre are 9am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on a Saturday. Opening hours will be extended during switchover in each area.