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**digitaluk**

# LONDON'S DIGITAL COUNTDOWN BEGINS

- *EastEnders stars launch switchover information campaign*
- *Help available for older and disabled people*

**EastEnders stars June Brown and Rudolph Walker today launched the digital TV switchover campaign for London, with a street party for residents of the capital's real Albert Square.**

On 4 April 2012, analogue TV services for nearly 12m viewers across the London TV region will start to be switched off. A public-information campaign launches today with advertising on channels including BBC and ITV, special messages on screen and a letter sent to households eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme.

The Help Scheme is available for those aged 75 or over, disabled, blind or partially sighted people, or those living in a care home. For £40 or free for people that are eligible and also on certain income related benefits, the Help Scheme will provide:

- Easy-to-use equipment to convert one set
- An approved installer to supply and install the necessary equipment, and
- A 12-month aftercare service including free helpline

Visiting the real Albert Square in Lambeth to host a special launch event with local residents, EastEnders favourites June (Dot Branning) and Rudolph (Patrick Trueman) got behind the campaign to make sure viewers can still watch their favourite shows after April.

June Brown said: "The thought of losing TV channels may concern many older or disabled people. I know from the letters I get every day that, for many older people and those who are housebound, TV is a real lifeline – almost a friend in the corner of the room.

"But there's no need to worry because help is available. No-one need buy a new TV; almost every set can be converted for digital."

Liam McKay, Help Scheme Manager for London, added: "The Switchover Help Scheme is going live in London from today, and we're writing to eligible older and disabled people with the offer of practical help to make the switch to digital.

"Over the coming months, everyone who is eligible for the Help Scheme will receive an information pack containing details of how to apply for help – so be sure to keep an eye out for yours coming through the door."

The information campaign, launching across the London TV region today, includes:

- **On-screen messages:** viewers will start seeing special messages covering part of their screens. They will increase in size and frequency as the switchover gets closer.
- **The Switchover Help Scheme** is writing to older and disabled people offering them practical help to switch one TV to digital, including equipment, installation and aftercare.<sup>1</sup>

- **Advertising:** there will be extensive local advertising on TV, radio and in local newspapers.
- **Roadshows:** the switchover roadshow will tour the region from January, stopping at dozens of locations, offering face-to-face advice and practical demonstrations of digital TV.
- **Guide to switchover:** in the new year, all households will be sent a detailed guide, including advice on retuning Freeview equipment.
- **Charity partnerships:** Age UK and RNIB are working with Digital UK and the Help Scheme to offer extra information and support to viewers who need it.

To apply for help from the Switchover Help Scheme, or to find out more about who is eligible for help, call the free helpline number on 0800 40 87 654. Textphone users can call 0800 40 85 936. For general switchover advice call Digital UK on 08456 50 50 50.

**- ends; notes follow -**

1. People are eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme if they are:
  - Aged 75 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

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard option of help. The service is free for people who are eligible and who also receive pension credit income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-related employment and support allowance.

2. **How switchover happens:** Analogue services will be switched off in two stages at each transmitter group. At stage one, analogue BBC Two is switched off and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available from relay transmitters for the first time. At stage two, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital TV, radio and text services.

Area	Transmitter group	Stage one (BBC2 analogue off)	Stage two (remaining analogue channels off)
Greater London and parts of the Home Counties	Crystal Palace	4 April 2012	18 April 2012

**Digital TV switchover** is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels are being switched off region by region and replaced with free-to-air digital TV and radio services (Freeview). Switchover will extend Freeview coverage virtually 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, Five and S4C), 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](http://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](http://digitaluk.co.uk/press). Follow us on **Twitter** for live updates on switchover at [twitter.com/DigitalUK](http://twitter.com/DigitalUK).

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