

BBC & ITV PRESENTERS LAUNCH TV SWITCHOVER CAMPAIGN

Countdown to end of analogue era for 1.4m households

The public information campaign to help viewers in the North East prepare for the digital TV switchover was launched today by Digital UK and the region's TV news presenters - Carol Malia, Jeff Brown, Pam Royle and Ian Payne.

As the countdown to a new era of TV continues, the BBC and ITV presenters teamed up to present the 'Switch o'clock news' at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts in Gateshead.

On 12 September, analogue terrestrial services for 1.4 million homes will start being switched off. Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme will support viewers as they prepare for the biggest change to TV for a generation. The campaign will comprise:

- **On-screen messages:** viewers will soon start to see special messages covering part of their screens. Captions on Freeview can be removed quickly by pressing the yellow button.
- **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.
- **Advertising:** there will be extensive local advertising on TV, radio and in local newspapers.
- **Roadshows:** the switchover roadshow will tour the region stopping at dozens of locations, offering face-to-face advice and practical demonstrations of digital TV equipment.
- **Guide to switchover:** a few months before switchover, all households will be sent a detailed guide, including advice on retuning Freeview equipment.
- **Charity partnerships:** Local charities will be working with Digital UK and the Help Scheme to offer extra information and support to viewers who need it.

The Digital UK website and advice line (details below) can also provide viewers with all they need to know about the switchover in their area.

Switchover will enable Freeview coverage to be increased to reach virtually all households in the North East. Viewers who get their TV signal from one of 42 local relay transmitters across the region will see their choice of terrestrial channels increase from four to around 15.

John Askew, Digital UK's regional manager for the North East, said: "The benefits of switchover will be felt by hundreds of thousands of viewers who will be able to receive free-to-air digital TV via an aerial for the first time. Over the coming months we will be making plenty of information available and working with the Switchover Help Scheme to ensure viewers know where to turn for advice."

Emma Speed, Switchover Help Scheme regional manager for the North East, added: "The thought of changes to their TV signal may concern many elderly or disabled people. But there's no need to worry because help is available. All you need to do is look out for the packs dropping through your

door any day now and, once you receive them, either give us a call or return your completed form and we'll do the rest.”

People are eligible for assistance from the Help Scheme if:

- They are aged 75 or over, or
- They have lived in a care home for six months or more
- They get (or could get) disability living allowance, or attendance or constant attendance allowance, or mobility supplement, or
- They are registered blind or partially sighted

To apply for help from the Switchover Help Scheme, or to find out if you are eligible for help, call the free helpline number on 0800 40 87 654. Textphone users can call 0800 40 85 936. For general information about digital switchover, call 08456 50 50 50 or visit www.digitaluk.co.uk

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

1. How switchover happens

Analogue services will be switched off in two stages at transmitters across the North East (the Tyne Tees TV region) on **12 and 26 September**. 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.

2. **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. Between now and the end of 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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