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Press release



CHARITIES UNITE TO SUPPORT SWITCH TO DIGITAL TV

A groundbreaking initiative bringing together three of the UK's leading charities to support viewers through the switch to digital television was announced today.

Digital UK, the independent organisation co-ordinating digital television switchover, will fund the £2.9m scheme to help ensure viewers are prepared when analogue television services are switched off region by region from 2008-2012.

The new organisation, Digital Outreach¹, brings together Age Concern England, Help the Aged, Community Service Volunteers and Collective Enterprises Limited, a company specialising in working with the charity sector. It will commission a range of support services from local and regional voluntary sector organisations and charities, initially in the first four switchover regions: Border, West Country, Wales and Granada. During the six months leading up to each switchover these activities will include the training of volunteers; dissemination of information to potentially vulnerable people; public meetings and events, home visits and a network of help centres at the time of switchover.

The programme will offer help to those not eligible for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme², established to provide equipment and assistance to those aged 75 and over, and disabled viewers. It will focus on groups including older people, those with sensory, mobility or dexterity impairments, people with learning difficulties and those that are socially isolated. Activities are scheduled to start in the Selkirk transmitter area of the Border TV region in May this year.

David Scott, Chief Executive of Digital UK, said: 'While the switch to digital TV will be easy for most people, the outreach programme is designed to complement the existing help scheme to deliver the support and reassurance required by potentially vulnerable viewers.'

'I'm delighted we've been able to bring together some of the country's leading charities to develop this genuinely innovative approach which will help to ensure everyone enjoys the benefits of digital television.'

Ian Agnew, Chief Executive of Digital Outreach, said: 'This is an exciting opportunity for us, both in terms of being able to support older and vulnerable people through the switchover, but also in demonstrating how four large and diverse organisations can work together in such an innovative way.'

-Ends-

Notes for editors follow

1. Digital Outreach Ltd comprises:

Age Concern England

Age Concern is a federation of around 350 independent, registered charities that work together locally, regionally and nationally with and for older people, enabling them to make more of life. It works in the community to support older people through a range of initiatives including the provision of information and advice, befriending, day centres, lunch clubs, transport services, home visits, and advocacy services. Age Concern England is the national Member and is representing the interests of the wider Age Concern federation in England and including Age Concerns Cymru and Scotland, within Digital Outreach. More information about Age Concern can be found on www.ageconcern.org.uk.

Help the Aged

Help the Aged is the charity fighting to free disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas from poverty, isolation, neglect and ageism. The charity delivers a range of services: information and advice, home support and community living, including international development work. These are supported by its paid-for services and fundraising activities. www.helptheaged.org.uk

Community Service Volunteers

CSV creates opportunities for people to take an active part in the life of their communities through volunteering, training and community action. In 2006/7, 229,869 people gave time as volunteers through CSV. CSV trained 12,309 people of all ages and linked 29,000 people to learning through BBC Local Radio. www.csv.org.uk

Collective Enterprises Limited

CEL is a private company providing e-business and project management to the third sector. Based in Glossop, Derbyshire, CEL is best known for delivering Foundations, the National Coordinating Body for Home Improvement Agencies, and Procurement for Housing. www.cel.co.uk.

2. **The Digital Switchover Help Scheme** is run by the BBC on behalf of the Government to help eligible people make the change to digital on one of their TV sets. People are eligible if they are aged 75 years or more, or if they are registered blind or partially sighted. Also eligible are people who get (or could get) attendance or constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement, or disability living allowance. Most people will be asked to contribute £40 towards the help. The service is free for people who are eligible and also get pension credit, income support or income-based jobseekers allowance.

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 of switchover and Digital UK are available to media, free of charge, from vismedia.co.uk

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