

Calling all landlords

A guide for landlords and property managers about resident consultation for digital TV.

The existing analogue TV signal will be switched off transmitter group by transmitter group, between now and 2012. This is called the digital TV switchover.

Many households can choose which TV services they want for themselves. However, those who are dependent on their landlord, property manager or factor to provide the TV signal through a communal or shared aerial, consultation is vital.

Communal TV aerial systems which deliver digital TV are:

- A **Master Antenna TV (MATV)** system, providing Freeview only
- An **Integrated Reception System (IRS)** provides Freeview, Sky, freesat from Sky, or Freesat
- **Cable TV** is available, in limited circumstances, through a communal system

Phone lines and **internet access** are individual services.

Ways to go digital:

Through an aerial

e.g Freeview

Through an aerial & phone line

e.g BT Vision

Through a phone line

e.g Tiscali

Through a satellite

e.g. Sky TV, freesat from Sky, Freesat

Through a cable

e.g Virgin Media

Many landlords, property managers and factors replace their old MATV system with an IRS, which provides access to Freeview and satellite services. Most choose one that will support Sky+, Freesat + and interactive services.

Upgrades involve costs, and public and private sector landlords, property managers or factors may seek to recover these from residents.

Even if the tenancy agreement, lease, title deeds or legislation doesn't require it, **consultation** with residents about the existing system, and its potential upgrade, is **good practice**. It should make the implementation and delivery of the works programme more straightforward.



Residents expect a say in the services they receive and how their money will be used. Sufficient transparency and time needs to be built into the process, to allow residents to get an adequate understanding of what is being proposed.

Consultation should be based on realistic response times. This can take several months to complete where there is liability to consult under relevant legislation. If you get it wrong, some residents may have recourse to a Rent Assessment Committee or Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

Key Stages for Consultation

- 1 Involve representatives from internal and external stakeholder groups in a digital switchover group, and appoint a 'digital champion' in your organisation
- 2 Ask your residents what TV services they have now and expect in the future: e.g. satellite services, foreign language channels, broadband
- 3 Identify the impact of the digital switchover on your organisation's other policy agendas e.g. Asset Management, Digital Inclusion, green issues
- 4 Consider the options available for your properties and residents, and how you are going to procure the works. Don't forget that service charge payers have legal rights that you need to observe, if you want to recover the costs
- 5 Give residents ample time to consider and respond to the proposals. Supply information about what the options will deliver, likely costs, how they will be recovered, and a timing plan for the works
- 6 Keep everyone informed about your switchover preparations
- 7 Use your successful consultation process to meet the criteria for the Accreditation Award 'Homes set for digital'.

'Homes set for digital' Accreditation Award:

Awarded to organisations which can guarantee the delivery of digital TV to all homes where they are responsible for the provision and maintenance of the aerial system.

To achieve this an organisation must have:

- An action plan and timetable to meet the switchover deadlines
- A named digital switchover champion to lead the implementation of the switchover action plan
- A statement of proposals to keep staff informed of digital plans and progress
- A statement of plans to communicate with residents or purchasers, as appropriate.

For more information or to apply visit digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers



Consultation checklist for landlords, property managers and factors

Your preparations

- Do you know when switchover happens in the areas where you have properties?
- Do you need to do anything to your communal TV aerial systems in readiness for switchover?
- Have you checked your tenancy agreements, leases or title deeds to see who is responsible for the communal TV aerial and undertaking any works?
- Have you asked your residents about their TV service needs or aspirations?
- Have you visited digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers to consider the options available?

Reaching an agreement

- What arrangements have you made to ensure that all your residents, including people with disabilities or sensory impairments, non-English speakers and those with literacy limitations, know about the TV services and options that are on offer, such as audio description, together with the likely costs and their obligations?
- Are there other policy considerations e.g. removal of individual satellite dishes with the installation of an IRS system, additional satellite services for non-English services, multi-room points?
- Do you have knowledgeable staff to answer questions?
- How will you reach consensus, including the views of everyone affected?
- Will your decision about the system to be installed apply across all your properties, or vary from block to block depending on the views of residents in each block?

Providing information

- Does the information shared with residents include an explanation about:
 - The TV services available after switchover
 - How the works are to be funded, including details of leaseback arrangements, if proposed
 - Maintenance contract options
 - Collection of costs through the rent or service charges (if permissible)
 - Application of housing benefit to infrastructure costs.
- Will you let your residents know:
 - Who has been invited to tender;
 - Their credentials;
 - The outcome of the tender process;
 - Revised costings, if necessary?
- Will residents have enough time to consider proposals and to respond at each stage of the consultation process?
- Have you met all legal consultation requirements?

The works and what happens next

- Will your programme of works be published, including writing to individual residents, before the works begin?
- Are residents clear on how maintenance is managed?
- Are you monitoring each stage of the process?

- Landlords are increasingly being judged on their residents' satisfaction
- Appropriate consultation is important, and valued by both tenants and owners
- Good practice guides and publications are available for public and private sector property managers from regulatory, trade and professional bodies.

There is more information at digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers

Remember

Failure to consult properly could mean failure to recover your costs!



For more information on the digital TV switchover, contact Digital UK.
Call us on **08458 455 455*** or visit us at digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers

Digital UK is working with:



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