Communicating the Digital Switchover in Adult Social Care – Communication Plan for Councils

Background

West Midlands colleagues across adult social services have come together to focus on the communications planning needed to support the upcoming transition from analogue to digital.

There is no national coordinated approach or government campaign about digital switch. In the absence of this, the telecommunications providers are occasionally communicating, but the approach from the industry is often responsive and there is no clear messaging about the drivers and benefits of digital switch. There are some individuals / organisations raising concerns about the risks of digital equipment: this is gaining traction and is not balanced with the benefits and drivers.

There is no clear call to action of what people need to do. Awareness within councils is often low outside of people directly involved in the work.

In summary, there is a communications gap which it is in the interests of councils to fill to ensure service users and residents are informed.

About this document

This document sets out an approach and templates to support local adult social care and communications teams to develop a local plan for communicating digital switch. It is also intended to help flag opportunities for councils within a region to collaborate on some aspects.

Communications is just one element of how the Digital Switchover will be delivered and it must be linked to the wider programme delivery work. Remember there will be other local government areas affected by the switchover.

Overall aims of communication plan
- To raise awareness amongst key audiences that digital switch is happening, why it is happening and that it has implications for local residents
- To help people who may be particularly affected to understand the implications, what they might need to do and where they can go for advice and information
- To help people who are in contact with affected residents to be able to provide advice and support
- To identify any calls to action and provide the means to communicate them to relevant audiences

If you want to know more about the digital switch, the LGA Digital Switchover Toolkit for Commissioners contains background information on digital switch and links to other resources and sources of information, including how other bodies are explaining digital switch.

https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/supporting-financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital/switchover/digital-switchover-toolkit-commissioners

How to use this document
The document splits the audience into two parts;

(1) Residents
(2) Staff and partners

The aim is to consider the key messages needed for each audience type and how best to communicate them. While general advice and prompts are provided you will need to consider your local needs and adapt your response accordingly.

There is also a section to help you "park" ideas that need to be considered but may not fit directly into this document.

The Digital Switchover is a complex and multi-faceted deliverable and so it is vital that any communication:

- Provides reassurance
- Is clear and simple
- Signposts to further information and help

- Is produced in a way that is accessible and inclusive

It is recommended that you complete this document with a few key stakeholders including local residents/ experts by experience. An Equality impact assessment should also be completed alongside this work.

To help get you started below are some of the key messages and issues that may need to be considered. It might be that your local region has additional key messages or specific issues that can be added to these lists.

Examples of key messages
- What do people need to know?
  - Digital switch is happening
  - What digital switch is (in simple terms)
  - This may mean that your telephone or telecare equipment might need to be upgraded to make sure they both continue to work. Making it real and practical e.g., you may not be able to use your phone
  - Is there any cost implication?
- What is the call to action?
  - Switch to digital
    - Check your phone is digital, if not, buy a digital one
    - Contact your telecare provider and ask them what their plan is to make sure your telecare equipment will work when your phone lines are changed
- Benefits of the move to digital
- Encourage people to self-help
- Point to trusted further information – you will need to agree where/who this point of trusted information is locally.

Issues for councils to consider
- What's already happening in your area? Eg. Has any comms been sent out and from whom? (eg telecoms suppliers, telecare providers etc)
- What is our job? What is the job of others?
- Data quality: do you have reliable contact information for people you may want to contact
- Who holds who's contacts? Consider teams, systems and other organisations

- How could awareness and communications be tied into existing work and processes e.g. annual reviews
- Remember to respect people's communication preferences: e.g. nominated key contact, accessibility requirements, mental capacity
- What can we learn from previous experience? e.g. roll out of citizen portals, Covid-19 communications
- How will we know if the comms / campaign has worked?
- Co-producing this with residents to ensure the messaging and approach meets their needs
- How to reinforce and make the relationships so that adult social care and telecare fits into the wider Digital Switchover plan.

Risks that may need to be considered have been provided in Appendix 1.

As part of the process to complete this template a number of workshops were held. The outputs of these have been incorporated into this updated template. Other key outputs have been included in Appendix 2 including the range of audiences you may wish to consider communicating with. This additional information will also help complete this template.

The Document

Section 1: Primary Audiences: people who are directly affected
1) People who are known to social care with telecare
2) People who are known to social care without telecare
3) People with telecare (not known to social care)
4) Residents with analogue telephony at home

Why: Purpose of communicating with these audiences
- To raise awareness of digital switch amongst people who are potentially affected
- To help people understand the potential impact for them
- To help people know what to do and where to go for help
- To minimise the risk of harm to someone who is vulnerable through failure of a telephone or telecare service

1) Audience: People who are known to social care with telecare

Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel	When? Timing / frequency
e.g. Housing provider			
e.g. Telecare provider			
e.g. Telecoms supplier			
e.g. Council			

2) Audience: People who are known to social care without telecare

Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel	When? Timing / frequency

3) Audience: People with telecare (not known to social care)

Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel	When? Timing / frequency

4) Audience: Residents with analogue telephone at home – is this in the remit of social care or councils at all?

Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel	When? Timing / frequency

Section 2: Secondary audiences: People who need to know about digital switch

Why: Purpose of communicating with these audiences
- They may come into contact with people directly affected and be able to provide support and high-level advice
- They may have responsibility for the person directly affected
- Digital switch may impact on their work

1) Internal

Audience	Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel / approach	When? Timing / frequency
E.g. Elected Members				
E.g. Frontline staff				

2) External

Audience	Who is leading the communication?	What? Key messages / call to action	How? Channel / approach	When? Timing / frequency
E.g. NHS partners				

Park Here

Please use this space to park any thoughts or ideas that need to be captured or actioned outside of the comms plan.

Appendix 1 – Risks

There will be a number of risks associated with the Digital Switchover programme that may need to be considered and addressed within communications. The table below sets out the Risks, Impact and Mitigations that may need to be communicated and whether the mitigation sits at local or national level. If at national level, this may indicate that communications need to point to information and help already available.

Where risks are identified, through this process, that are not related to communications, these need to be raised via the normal risk process for your organisation and added to the corporate risk register where appropriate.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation / Handling	National or Local
Scams associated with switch	People may be wary of engaging with communications People may be the victims of scams / spend money erroneously Increased fear of digital switch	Clear messaging to people affected about digital switch; reiterate trusted channels and organisations. See TSA guidance incl. who to contact if you suspect a scam here.	National
Power outage	Technology reliant on digital hubs (which require power) and digital lines are less resilient People are fearful about relying on technology to meet their needs	Communicate about how battery back-ups for key pieces of equipment in the home will mitigate short term power outage risk; • Ensure battery back-ups + SIM cards are standard to cover short term issues • Reassuring messaging to customers through communications and at installation of digital equipment • Strengthen data quality to be able to identify high risk people in the event of a major incident	National
Cyber attack	Could render equipment unusable if subject to cyber attack.	Work with digital teams to understand Cyber Safety in place to be able to communicate this clearly. See TSA and LGA cyber security guidance for ARCs here.	National
Accessibility	People could be excluded if communications are not offered in a range of formats and languages	Engage with residents and Experts by Experience about their accessibility needs. Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment for your communications plan	Local

Data quality	People may not receive relevant communications because their contact details / personal data is not up to date	Push on data quality at each touchpoint; updating / sharing contact data across agencies (within GDPR guidance)	Local
Telecare – Lack of Engagement	Users of Telecare, both privately and via social care, may not be ready for the switchover and have devices that will no longer work.	Ensure local telecare companies are part of this process and the wider planning for Digital Switchover. Be clear on who your local lead is for communications.	Local
Forgetting "Mission Critical" Tech	Additional devices in the home, that require analogue connections, are forgotten about in communications I.e. fire alarms.	Get broad engagement in the Digital Switchover process and communications plan to ensure that all products that could be impacted are understood. Using your corporate risk register may help.	Local
Not linked to Business Continuity/Resilience teams/ plans	No plans in place should there be a failure of connectivity.	Link in with the teams who manage service failure and ensure communications remind of updating business continuity plans in relation to the switchover.	Local
Switchover Technicians not reconnecting vital equipment	People left without vital equipment working.	Ensure communication clearly signposts people where to get help and support. Ensure staff who will be engaging with people also know this (e.g. social workers, contact centre staff) Work with tel-co companies to ensure their technicians are mindful of the impact they could have and receive appropriate training.	Local National

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Internal audiences to be communicated with:
Social worker/social care ops teams including therapy teams, in-house telecare provider, contact centres/front door, prescribers / trusted assessors, elected members, corporate functions, public health, internal neighbourhood/community teams, comms teams, engagement teams, in-house care provision, safeguarding boards, digital inclusion programmes.

Molly
- local resident, Care Act eligible
- receives telecare as part of care and support plan

Brian
- referred for telecare following a hospital stay
- has no other relationship with the council

Ray
- family purchases his own telecare from an out of area provider
- not known to social care

Anne
- has no telecare or relationship with social care; is 90
- lives alone and has an analogue telephone

External audiences to be communicated with:
Service users / local residents, families, friends, carers, the public, care providers (e.g. extra care, supported living, home care, day services, reablement), other staffed care settings, external telecare providers, housing, equipment providers, responder services, ARCs (Alarm Receiving Centre), telecoms supplier, outsourced social care services (e.g. carers services, home from hospital, independent living), 3rd sector and community services, other statutory services (primary care, NHS community, pharmacies, fire services, police), discharge, NHS strategic level, community groups, local telecare provider (possibly), local media.

Internal

1) Adult social work ops teams (older people, LD, sensory, physical disabilities, mental health, therapies)
2) Carers leads
3) Front door
4) Commissioners
5) Wider ASC staff
6) Wider council staff (housing, other "place" teams)
7) Internal telecare / AT teams* if in-house
8) Senior Leadership teams
9) Elected members
10) Comms teams
11) Engagement teams
12) Corporate functions
13) Safeguarding teams
14) Public health
15) Community/neighbourhood teams
16) Digital inclusion programmes
17) Libraries

External

1) The public: families and friends, carers
2) Care technology providers: ARC (Alarm Receiving Centre), responder services
3) Care Providers
4) Housing providers
5) Telecommunications Suppliers
6) Local support services – statutory and third sector
7) Primary care
8) Community services
9) Pharmacies
10) NHS – other

11) Fire service
12) Police
13) MPs
14) Carer assessors
15) Trusted assessors
16) Hospital to home teams – discharge
17) Supported Living & Extra Care
18) Types of care providers and settings: day services, home care, LD supported living, care homes
19) Digital inclusion
20) Bill payers (as opposed to people receiving the service – sometimes these are different

Channels

1) Team meetings
2) Social care newsletters
3) Email
4) Briefing packs and presentations
5) Websites
6) Social media
7) Local media
8) Social care annual review
9) Where is your best data system? All about the data quality. E.g. Liquid Logic Citizens portal – via email and letter. Able to extract people out of the system directly
10) Local digital Inclusion programmes
11) Local engagement groups
12) Public Health channels
13) Council Tax Annual Bill
14) Electoral Roll
15) NHS: primary care, community staff, pharmacy, district nursing, therapies
16) Telecoms companies: do they have postcodes, do they know who is flagged to them?
17) Lower tier authorities (where applicable)

18) Parish councils or equivalent

19) Libraries

Appendix 3 – Trusted Information Sources

TSA:

•https://www.tsa-voice.org.uk/campaigns/digital-shift/

•https://www.tsa-voice.org.uk/downloads/pdfs/analogue_to_digital_shift_-_10_facts_-_march_2020.pdf

LGA

•https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover/digital-switchover-toolkit-for-commissioners

•https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover

Digital Office for Scotland

•https://tec.scot/sites/default/files/2021-07/The-Digital-Telecare-Playbook.pdf

•https://tec.scot/sites/default/files/2021-07/The-National-Briefing-Document.pdf

Tel co's:

•BT Open Reach

•Virgin media / O2

Housing

•Housing LIN / Appello: https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Digital-Telecare-How-ready-are-we-for-the-digital-switch/

•https://www.almshouses.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Erosh-Briefing-Digital-Switchover-final-Feb-19-003.pdf